

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2026-09: Airport Road Pump Station Storage Tanks Major Amendment/SE-2026-13: Reduction in Setback Requirement for Storage Tank
Review Type	Major Amendment
Parcel Identification	03200-00-00-041A2
Location	4384 Berkmar Drive. Approximately 524’ south of Airport Rd., approximately 843’ west of Rt. 29
Zoned	Rural Areas (RA), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA)/Short Elliot Hendrickson (Nate Nickerson)
Magisterial District	Rio
Proposal	To construct two water storage tanks for the existing RWSA pump station along with associated site improvements on approximately 1.06 acres. To reduce the required setback from the northern parcel boundary by 12’.
Context	The subject property contains a single building that houses a pump station. The immediately adjacent areas to the northeast and east are wooded. The surrounding area is characterized by a mix of residential, industrial, and commercial development.
Visibility	The closest proposed tank is situated approximately 551 feet from the Airport Rd. EC. Due to the site's higher elevation than Airport Rd., the upper parts of the water tanks are expected to be visible above the nearby trees and development. Visibility is also anticipated from Rt. 29; however, the parcel does not fall within the Rt. 29 EC overlay.
ARB Meeting Date	June 8, 2026
Staff Contact	Khrist Taggart

PROJECT HISTORY

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) recommended approval of the initial site plan (ARB-2020-95) to construct a water pump station and storage tanks at this site on October 5, 2020. The storage tanks were subsequently removed from the proposal. With the remaining improvements having limited visibility from the EC, the final site plan (ARB-2021-68) was reviewed and approved by staff without further ARB review. Pre-application meetings were conducted in 2025 and 2026 to reconsider the addition of the two water storage tanks to the site.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	GENERAL GUIDELINES		
	<i>Purpose</i>		
1	The goal of the regulation of the design of development within the designated Entrance Corridors is to ensure that new development within the corridors reflects the traditional architecture of the area. Therefore, it is the purpose of ARB review and of these Guidelines, that proposed development within the designated Entrance Corridors reflect elements of design characteristic of the significant historical landmarks, buildings, and structures of the Charlottesville and Albemarle area, and to promote orderly and attractive development within these corridors. Applicants should note that replication of historic structures is neither required nor desired.	No changes to the existing building and no new buildings are proposed with this application.	See accessory structures and equipment, and landscaping recommendations, below.
2	Visitors to the significant historical sites in the Charlottesville and Albemarle area experience these sites as ensembles of buildings, land, and vegetation. In order to accomplish the integration of buildings, land, and vegetation characteristic of these sites, the Guidelines require attention to four primary factors: compatibility with significant historic sites in the area; the character of the Entrance Corridor; site development and layout; and landscaping.		
3-5, 9-16	<i>Compatibility with significant historic sites</i> , compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor, structure design		
	Accessory structures and equipment		
17	Accessory structures and equipment should be integrated into the overall plan of development and shall, to the extent possible, be compatible with the building designs used on the site.	The proposed plan shows two water storage tanks situated to the east of the existing pump station building, but the project narrative indicates that the second tank may be installed later. Sheet P102 depicts a cylindrical structure, approximately 75 feet in diameter and 47 feet in height, measured from the base to the vent at the top of the dome cap. The applicant’s viewshed analysis illustrates that approximately the upper third of the tanks would be visible from Airport Rd. between Grand Forks Blvd. and Rt. 29. Using the height (148’) and elevation (781.83’) of the existing cell tower as reference points, the tanks are not expected to be visible west of Grand Forks Blvd. due to the existing vegetation and the proposed tower locations sitting at a lower elevation than the topography west of the site. Given the parcel's size and topography, positioning tanks of this size in a manner that eliminates visibility from Airport Rd. would not be feasible. This makes the material and color used for the tanks important.	Based on the information provided, either a welded steel tank or a concrete tank would yield a smooth, seamless appearance that would provide an appropriate appearance as viewed from the EC.
18	The following should be located to eliminate visibility from the Entrance Corridor street. If, after appropriate siting, these features will still have a negative visual impact on the Entrance Corridor street, screening should be provided to eliminate visibility. a. Loading areas, b. Service areas, c. Refuse areas, d. Storage areas, e. Mechanical equipment, f. Above-ground utilities, and g. Chain link fence, barbed wire, razor wire, and similar security fencing devices.		Include a note on the drawings stating that both tanks will be constructed from the same material and finished in the same color to ensure consistency in design and maintenance.
19	Screening devices should be compatible with the design of the buildings and surrounding natural vegetation and may consist of: a. Walls, b. Plantings, and c. Fencing.		Provide information on how frequently refinishing would be needed for concrete storage tanks.

		The applicant has provided information on three types of materials that are being considered for the tanks: welded steel, bolted steel, and concrete. The welded steel and concrete options would provide smooth, seamless finishes, whereas the bolted steel construction would feature visible seams and joint lines. A construction method that provides a uniform, consistent appearance could help reduce visual impacts. The applicant has also outlined the maintenance requirements associated with each construction method. Welded steel tanks necessitate field-applied coatings, which must be reapplied at intervals of 15 to 25 years. Bolted steel tanks possess coatings with a lifespan equivalent to that of the tank; however, exposed bolts, seams, and joints may require periodic repair to prevent leaks. Concrete storage tanks do not require exterior coatings, but they can be applied and would require periodic reapplication. Utilizing the same color for both tanks and finishes that require minimal maintenance would be beneficial for ensuring a consistent aesthetic. The project narrative discusses the gray color selected for tanks. Welded steel and concrete tanks offer more color options than bolted steel. Lighter colors are preferred for tanks to reflect sunlight and reduce heat absorption. With the skylit background and a wooded foreground, a blue or green color (Fig. 2) would provide a color that is likely to stand out more due to the ever-changing appearance of the sky and foliage. The proposed gray appears to be a medium tone that provides a neutral and consistent appearance within the surrounding context. A medium to light gray is expected to have an acceptable appearance. The perspectives show a reflective finish on the tanks which may make them more noticeable in the surrounding context. Using a finish and/or material that has a matte appearance could help the visible portions of the tanks better recede into the surrounding environment.	Provide a physical color sample with the next submittal. Finishes that have a matte appearance would be appropriate.
21	The following note should be added to the site plan and the architectural plan: “Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated.”	The applicant’s narrative notes that no mechanical equipment will be added with this amendment and the site plan includes the standard mechanical equipment note.	None.
22-31	Lighting	The applicant’s narrative notes that no lighting will be added with this amendment.	Revise the site plan to include a note confirming that no lighting is proposed with this amendment.
	Landscaping		

7	The requirements of the Guidelines regarding landscaping are intended to reflect the landscaping characteristic of many of the area's significant historic sites which is characterized by large shade trees and lawns. Landscaping should promote visual order within the Entrance Corridor and help to integrate buildings into the existing environment of the corridor.	This parcel has no frontage along the EC street. 28 holly trees are proposed along the northern, eastern, and southern perimeters of the site. With a mature height of 15 to 20 feet, the proposed holly trees will not entirely obscure the tanks; however, they will contribute to screening the lower portion of the tanks once they reach maturity.	None.
8	Continuity within the Entrance Corridor should be obtained by planting different types of plant materials that share similar characteristics. Such common elements allow for more flexibility in the design of structures because common landscape features will help to harmonize the appearance of development as seen from the street upon which the Corridor is centered.		
32	Landscaping along the frontage of Entrance Corridor streets should include the following: a. Large shade trees should be planted parallel to the Entrance Corridor Street. Such trees should be at least 3½ inches caliper (measured 6 inches above the ground) and should be of a plant species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 35 feet on center. b. Flowering ornamental trees of a species common to the area should be interspersed among the trees required by the preceding paragraph. The ornamental trees need not alternate one for one with the large shade trees. They may be planted among the large shade trees in a less regular spacing pattern. c. In situations where appropriate, a three or four board fence or low stone wall, typical of the area, should align the frontage of the Entrance Corridor street. d. An area of sufficient width to accommodate the foregoing plantings and fencing should be reserved parallel to the Entrance Corridor street, and exclusive of road right-of-way and utility easements.		
33	Landscaping along interior roads: a. Large trees should be planted parallel to all interior roads. Such trees should be at least 2½ inches caliper (measured six inches above the ground) and should be of a plant species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 40 feet on center.	No interior roads are present or proposed. A travelway extends northward from Berkmar Dr. then eastward to provide access to the site. No changes are proposed to this travelway with this plan.	None.
34	Landscaping along interior pedestrian ways: a. Medium trees should be planted parallel to all interior pedestrian ways. Such trees should be at least 2½ inches caliper (measured six inches above the ground) and should be of a species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 25 feet on center.	No interior pedestrian paths are proposed within the site.	None.

35	Landscaping of parking areas: a. Large trees should align the perimeter of parking areas, located 40 feet on center. Trees should be planted in the interior of parking areas at the rate of one tree for every 10 parking spaces provided and should be evenly distributed throughout the interior of the parking area. b. Trees required by the preceding paragraph should measure 2½ inches caliper (measured six inches above the ground); should be evenly spaced; and should be of a species common to the area. Such trees should be planted in planters or medians sufficiently large to maintain the health of the tree and shall be protected by curbing. c. Shrubs should be provided as necessary to minimize the parking area’s impact on Entrance Corridor streets. Shrubs should measure 24 inches in height.	No changes are proposed to the existing parking lot within the site.	None.
36	Landscaping of buildings and other structures: a. Trees or other vegetation should be planted along the front of long buildings as necessary to soften the appearance of exterior walls. The spacing, size, and type of such trees or vegetation should be determined by the length, height, and blankness of such walls. b. Shrubs should be used to integrate the site, buildings, and other structures; dumpsters, accessory buildings and structures; “drive thru” windows; service areas; and signs. Shrubs should measure at least 24 inches in height.	No changes to the existing building are proposed. The proposed holly trees along the northern perimeter of the site will not entirely obscure the tower; however, they will contribute to screening the lower portion of the tower once they reach maturity.	None.
37	Plant species: a. Plant species required should be as approved by the Staff based upon but not limited to the <i>Generic Landscape Plan Recommended Species List</i> and <i>Native Plants for Virginia Landscapes (Appendix D)</i>.	The proposed plantings are on the approved plant list.	None.
38	Plant health: The following note should be added to the landscape plan: “All site plantings of trees and shrubs shall be allowed to reach, and be maintained at, mature height; the topping of trees is prohibited. Shrubs and trees shall be pruned minimally and only to support the overall health of the plant.”	The note is present on the landscape plan.	None.
	Site Development and layout		

6	Site development should be sensitive to the existing natural landscape and should contribute to the creation of an organized development plan. This may be accomplished, to the extent practical, by preserving the trees and rolling terrain typical of the area; planting new trees along streets and pedestrian ways and choosing species that reflect native forest elements; insuring that any grading will blend into the surrounding topography thereby creating a continuous landscape; preserving, to the extent practical, existing significant river and stream valleys which may be located on the site and integrating these features into the design of surrounding development; and limiting the building mass and height to a scale that does not overpower the natural settings of the site, or the Entrance Corridor.	28 holly trees are proposed for planting along the northern, eastern, and southern perimeters of the site. Once fully matured, these trees will help to reduce the visibility of the lower portions of the tanks from the Airport Rd. and Rt. 29 ECs.	None.
39	The relationship of buildings and other structures to the Entrance Corridor street and to other development within the corridor should be as follows: a. An organized pattern of roads, service lanes, bike paths, and pedestrian walks should guide the layout of the site. b. In general, buildings fronting the Entrance Corridor street should be parallel to the street. Building groupings should be arranged to parallel the Entrance Corridor street. c. Provisions should be made for connections to adjacent pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems. d. Open spaces should be tied into surrounding areas to provide continuity within the Entrance Corridor. e. If significant natural features exist on the site (including creek valleys, steep slopes, significant trees or rock outcroppings), to the extent practical, then such natural features should be reflected in the site layout. If the provisions of Section 32.5.2.n of the <i>Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance</i> apply, then improvements required by that section should be located so as to maximize the use of existing features in screening such improvements from Entrance Corridor streets. f. The placement of structures on the site should respect existing views and vistas on and around the site.	The site is accessed via Berkmar Dr., which features a sidewalk. The travelway and parking area are organized. No changes are proposed that would impact this. Section 4.10.3.1.b of the ordinance stipulates that water tanks must maintain a setback from the lot lines equivalent to the height of the tank. Tank #2, situated along the southern property line, complies with this requirement; however, Tank #1, located near the northern property line, falls approximately 12 feet short of the requirement. Site constraints do not allow alternate tank locations. Given the site's size and topography, repositioning the tank would have a negligible effect on reducing visibility of the tower. Consequently, staff do not oppose the request for the special exception. The plan indicates that the existing tree line along sections of the northern, southern, and eastern property boundaries will be removed to facilitate the proposed grading and site improvements. The grading is not expected to be visible from the Airport Road EC. In compensation for the disrupted vegetation, 28 holly trees are proposed for planting. However, depending on the height of the existing trees within the tree line that will be removed, the visibility of the lower portions of the tower may increase until the proposed trees reach maturity.	Staff recommend that the ARB send a recommendation of no objection on the Special Exception request to reduce the setback requirement.
	Site Grading		

40	Site grading should maintain the basic relationship of the site to surrounding conditions by limiting the use of retaining walls and by shaping the terrain through the use of smooth, rounded landforms that blend with the existing terrain. Steep cut or fill sections are generally unacceptable. Proposed contours on the grading plan shall be rounded with a ten-foot minimum radius where they meet the adjacent condition. Final grading should achieve a natural, rather than engineered, appearance. Retaining walls 6 feet in height and taller, when necessary, shall be terraced and planted to blend with the landscape.	Grading is shown south and east of Tank #2, but this grading is not expected to be visible from the Airport Rd. EC.	None.
41	No grading, trenching, or tunneling should occur within the drip line of any trees or other existing features designated for preservation in the final Certificate of Appropriateness. Adequate tree protection fencing should be shown on, and coordinated throughout, the grading, landscaping and erosion and sediment control plans.	There are existing trees that are to be preserved as a landscape buffer. Tree protection fencing is shown on the grading and erosion and sediment control plan, but not the landscape plan.	Show tree protection fencing on, and coordinated throughout, the grading, landscaping, and erosion and sediment control plans.
42	Areas designated for preservation in the final Certificate of Appropriateness should be clearly delineated and protected on the site prior to any grading activity on the site. This protection should remain in place until completion of the development of the site.		
43	Preservation areas should be protected from storage or movement of heavy equipment within this area.		
20	Surface runoff structures and detention ponds should be designed to fit into the natural topography to avoid the need for screening. When visible from the Entrance Corridor street, these features must be fully integrated into the landscape. They should not have the appearance of engineered features.	There are two existing stormwater management facilities located between the proposed storage tanks and the eastern boundary of the site. The changes proposed for either facility would not make them visible from the Airport Rd. EC.	None.
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.		



Figure 2: Water storage tanks within the County, left to right: 4466 Rockfish Gap Turnpike (Green), 1962 Tudor Ct. (Dark Green), 2226 Woodburn Rd (Light Blue), and 1737 Avon Street Ext (White).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. Visibility of the storage tanks.
2. Storage tanks: material type, color, finish, and construction method.

Staff recommends approval of the major amendment with the following revisions:

1. Based on the information provided, either a welded steel tank or a concrete tank would yield a smooth, seamless appearance that would provide an appropriate appearance as viewed from the EC.
2. Include a note on the drawings stating that both tanks will be constructed from the same material and finished in the same color to ensure consistency in design and maintenance.
3. Provide information on how frequently refinishing would be needed for concrete storage tanks.
4. Provide a physical color sample with the next submittal. Finishes that have a matte appearance would be appropriate.
5. Revise the site plan to include a note confirming that no lighting is proposed with this amendment.
6. Show tree protection fencing on, and coordinated throughout, the grading, landscaping, and erosion and sediment control plans.

Recommendation on the SE:

Staff recommend that the ARB forward the following recommendation to the Agent for the Site Review Committee:

The ARB has no objection to the Special Exception request to reduce the setback requirement.

ATTACHMENTS

Attach 1: [ARB-2026-00009: Airport Road Pump Station Site Plan](#)

Attach 2: [ARB-2026-00009: Airport Road Pump Station Storage Tank Architectural Drawings, Tank Material/Color, Viewshed Analysis/Renderings](#)