

July 29, 2022

Joseph Yaciuk, AICP
Planning Administrator, Planning and
Economic Development Department
City of Pembroke Pines
601 City Center Way, 3rd Floor
Pembroke Pines, FL 33025

Re: Special Permit Amendment Request
Franklin Academy
18800 Pines Boulevard

Dear Mr. Yaciuk,

Pursuant to ULDC Article 155.526 (A)(1)(g), Franklin Academy requests an amendment to the school's Special Exception granted in 2011 for the purpose of expanding their flagship campus located at 18800 Pines Boulevard.

Franklin Academy Charter Schools opened its doors in August of 2011, with their inaugural K-8 campus in Pembroke Pines. Since that first year, they have expanded to six campuses across Broward and Palm Beach County, including the addition of a second campus in Pembroke Pines. They now serve more than 8,500 K-12 students across South Florida.

In 2014, Franklin began offering the International Baccalaureate programme and in 2020, David Weiss the Head of IB World Schools notified them that they were the first (and possibly still the only) charter school system in the nation to offer the IB Programme at each and every one of their campuses. All of their Pembroke Pines K-8 students enrolled in grades 6,7, and 8 are part of the IB Programme and are immersed in a rigorous course of study highlighting international mindedness as well as the promotion of world peace. The promotion of character development has also been enhanced by the addition of the IB MYP and each year a select group of students, who exemplify all of the core values identified in the IB Learner Profile, are nominated by their teachers to become IB Ambassadors and serve as liaisons between the students, families, MYP staff and community at large.

You can read more about Franklin's IB offerings here: <https://ib.franklin-academy.org/>

While Franklin has enjoyed academic success at each of their campuses, in every year that the State has provided school grades, our Pembroke Pines K-8 campus has been an

A-rated school each and every school year since 2011 and for the better part of this past decade has been a State Recognized High Performing Florida Charter School. This campus currently serves 1,340 students and has extensive wait lists each year. With the addition of the new gymnasium and 16 classrooms, enrollment is expected to expand upwards toward 1,860 students.

The arts — music, dance, drama, and more — have the power to express meaning in ways that no other medium can match. Children also need access to the power of individual expression that the arts afford. Some students may not find academic success without it. Others simply deserve exposure to the arts as a fundamental part of our culture. Franklin Academy prides itself in providing endless opportunities for students to explore their talents. In 2019, their drama department performed in an unforgettable evening of song, dance and drama at the Miramar Cultural Center as their students starred in a production of Annie, Jr. and celebrated the arts through a magical and musical holiday extravaganza. One of the cornerstones of Franklin is that they teach to the “whole” child. As part of this concept, they also offer Spanish and Chess for each and every student, starting in kindergarten.

Last summer, Franklin Academy celebrated the fact that they had 14 employees who began at Franklin when they first started and reached their 10-year employment milestone. This year they have another 7 employees reaching this impressive milestone, which speaks volume about the quality of the organization.

In support of their continued success in providing extraordinary K-8 education to the community, Franklin Academy requests amendment to their existing Special Exception as shown on the site plan application and as generally outlined as follows:

- Expand the campus by 4 acres by incorporating the parcel to the east.
- Construct a new education building composed of 16 classrooms and a gymnasium.
- Expand the existing athletic fields.
- Substantially increase on-site vehicular stacking 108% from 2,635 LF to 5,500 LF.
- Increase the student population by 38% from 1,340 to 1,860.
- The education grades will remain kindergarten through 8th grade.

The proposed amendment to the existing Special Exception meets or exceeds the following Standards for Approval as enumerated in Section 155.301(M)(3) of the ULDC:

(a) The proposed use is compatible with the existing natural environment and community character of the properties within the immediate neighborhood.

Response: The existing use has been previously approved and has been shown to be compatible with the existing natural environment and community character of the properties within the immediate neighborhood. The proposed expansion is nearly identical to the existing use in both form and function.

(b) The proposed use is deemed desirable for public convenience, and not injurious or otherwise detrimental to the public health, safety, comfort and welfare.

Response: Franklin Academy in an outstanding and extraordinarily successful school providing desired services to the citizens of the City. The education of children is a necessity and is consistent with stated community goals and objectives.

(c) The design of the proposed use shall minimize adverse effects, including noise, light, dust or other potential nuisances, of the proposed use on adjacent property through the use of building orientation, setbacks, buffers, landscaping and other design criteria consistent with the city regulations to the greatest extent possible. Entire site shall be void of any pre-existing code violations.

Response: The design of the site conforms to all setbacks, buffers, landscaping and other design criteria. The school has operated and will continue to operate in conformance with the City's noise, light, and dust ordinance. The site has no pre-existing code violations.

(d) There are adequate parking areas and off-street truck loading spaces (if applicable) consistent with the parking requirements of the Code, and the layout of the parking and vehicular use areas is convenient and conducive to safe and efficient operation consistent with the city standards to the greatest extent possible.

Response: Parking will be increased 61 percent (from 140 to 229 spaces) while the school population will only be increased 38 percent (from 1,340 to 1,860 students). Based on current performance, the proposed parking will be in excess of needs. Off-street truck loading remains in excess of needed capacity due to the extensive curb-side loading capacity.

The configuration of both passenger vehicle and bus curb-side operations, while reversed, are essentially the same in the proposed amendment to the site plan. The school has safely and effectively operated in this configuration for the last twelve years.

(e) There will be adequate provisions for traffic movement, both vehicular and pedestrian internal to the use and adequate measures exist or shall be taken to provide ingress and egress to the proposed use, for both vehicles and pedestrian, in a manner that minimizes traffic congestion in the public streets, and the use may not result in a significantly greater amount of traffic on local streets than would result from a development permitted by right, performed through use of a traffic study.

Response: A traffic report has been prepared as part of this application and site operations are outlined in the submitted Operational Management Plan. In general, the proposed modification to the existing Special Exception are as follows:

- On-site passenger car circulation is significantly enhanced by increasing internal stacking from 2,640 linear feet to 5,500 linear feet; an increase of 108%.
- On-site bus circulation is repositioned from the east side of campus to the west. Queuing and stacking capacities are increased from approximately 180 linear feet to 580 linear feet.
- Pedestrian and bike access remain as previously approved
- Ingress and egress points remain as previously approved.

f) The land area must be sufficient, appropriate and adequate for the use and for any reasonably anticipated expansion thereof.

Response: The area of the site is increased from 7 acres to 11 acres. The additional area offers the capacity for enhanced educational programs, on-site passenger vehicle circulation, on-site bus circulation, and increased sports and athletic field capacity. Other than as requested by this application, there is no anticipated future expansion.

In addition, the proposed amendment to the existing Special Exception meets or exceeds the criteria enumerated in Section 155.526(A) of the ULDC:

1. Site requirements. The following minimum standards shall apply:

(a) Lot size. The lot shall have a minimum lot size of four acres.

RESPONSE: The lot exceeds 11 acres.

(b) Schools must be located within freestanding single use structure(s) unless the school is accessory to a library, community service, museum, performing arts, theater, cinema, church, Florida college system institution, and college or university facilities.

RESPONSE: The school is located in freestanding buildings.

(c) Barrier. If the site abuts a canal or other water body, a minimum eight-foot-high fence shall be installed along the property line abutting the water body in order to protect the students. If the site abuts a residential property, a minimum six-foot-high masonry wall shall be installed along the property line abutting residential properties. In addition to the requirements above, the school must provide additional fencing and or gates on their site plan to ensure the security of the student population.

RESPONSE: The school is separated from the existing adjoining wetland and conservation easement parcel to the south by an existing previously approved 6' high fence. The proposed addition to the school site will be separated from the proposed wetland and conservation easement by an 8' high fence.

Where the wetland and conservation easement abuts the residential property to the south an 8' high fence will be provided to match the existing fence. The placement of irrigation lines and control wire prohibit the installation of a wall.

(d) Site plan requirements. A local business tax receipt shall not be issued until a site plan or site plan modification is approved consistent with these land development regulations.

RESPONSE: Noted.

(e) Off-site improvements. If through the site plan or site plan modification process the City Engineer, Broward County or state transportation related agencies deem that off-site improvements are required, such as sidewalks, traffic signalization, signage, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, transit amenities, school crossings and zones, and turning lanes, such improvements and amenities must be constructed and approved before a local business tax receipt may be issued.

RESPONSE: No off-site improvements are anticipated.

(f) Operational management plan. An operational management plan should be included with the submittal. The plan should include the following information:

i. General summary of operations on site. Including but not limited to:

a. Five-year projected school enrollment with grade configurations as well as maximum student enrollment.

- b. Hours of operation.
- c. Student pickup and drop off times.
- d. Loading and unloading procedures.
- e. Onsite queuing and traffic control measures.
- f. Onsite and off-site traffic improvements associated with proposal.
- ii. Traffic and pedestrian operational plan showing the ingress and egress of pedestrians and all vehicles from the school site during school during school pickup and drop off hours and safe routes with crossing guards, where required, necessary to protect the students. This plan must include all onsite and off-site improvements, as outlined within this section, within a minimum of 1,000 feet from the school property.
- iii. Organizational structure. An organizational chart and explanation showing the hierarchical arrangement of lines of authority, contact information of such personnel, right and duties of the organization.
- iv. Traffic and vehicular stacking analysis by a registered traffic engineer based on maximum enrollment figures provided by the school upon consideration of the site plan.

RESPONSE: The required Operations and Maintenance Plan has been submitted with the site plan application.

(g) Applicant will be required to apply for an amendment to the special exception in the event the applicant wishes to increase maximum enrollment or change in grade configuration at the facility beyond what may have been authorized by the original special exception.

RESPONSE: Noted.

(h) The minimum regulations set forth in this section shall be applied and construed in a manner so as not to be more stringent than the latest edition of the state requirements for educational facilities.

Response: Noted.

2. Physical environment requirements.

(a) Where recreational play areas are provided, a minimum of 50% of the total recreational play area for the school shall be located outdoors. Recreational play areas must be clearly delineated on a site plan and cannot be located within required landscape buffer yards, parking lots or areas of traffic circulation. Outdoor county or city public recreational facilities or parks located within Pembroke Pines municipal boundaries may be used to meet this requirement with proper governmental approvals.

RESPONSE: The school currently has ample outdoor play area conforming to this requirement including upper and lower playgrounds, parkour track, a general-

purpose court, and athletic fields. The proposed site plan will expand these outdoor areas to approximately 2.4 acres.

(b) Drop-off/pick-up area. A student drop-off and pick-up area shall be depicted and dedicated to drop-off activities and will not interfere with onsite parking on the conceptual site plan, which area shall be consistent with the "Safe Routes to School Guide, Student Drop-off and Pick-up", which guide was developed by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. The appropriate length and dimensions of the drop-off area shall be identified within a stacking study.

RESPONSE: The drop-off/ pick-up areas are consistent with the "Safe Routes to School Guide, Student Drop-off and Pick-up". In addition, the configuration of the drop-off and pick-up are configured in the same manner as the previous system that has operated successfully for the past 12 years. The length and dimension are identified within the stacking study.

3. Other requirements.

(a) School crossing guards. Public and private schools are required to, and shall provide at their own expense, school crossing guards.

Response: A crossing guard is provided at staff position 1 as described in the Operations Maintenance Plan.

(b) Bus storage. Private or public schools shall not store buses on site.

Response: No bus storage exists or is proposed.

(c) Timing. In order to afford sufficient time to process and secure required development orders, building permits, and local business tax receipt approval, a complete special exception use application must be filed with the Planning and Economic Development Division with all fees paid no later than 90 days after awarding of the charter for the next school year.

Response: Noted

(d) Schools must apply for local business tax receipt in compliance with Chapter 115 of the City Code of Ordinances.

RESPONSE: The school has an existing business tax receipt.

(e) Special exception applications shall comply with regulations as set forth article 3

Response: The criteria of Article 3 are addressed above.

(f) Signs shall comply with requirements set forth in 155.695-155.6107.

RESPONSE: The only new signs proposed are house number signs and those signs are compliant.

(g) Other. Any other documentation or requirements that the Planning and Economic Development Division deems relevant to the operation of such use or safety of the students or both.

Response: Noted.

Franklin Academy has enjoyed a long and successful relationship with the community. We believe that this request for an amendment to the existing Special Exception is consistent with the City's goals and objectives.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

Sincerely,



J. Scott Mire - Agent