



Legislation Text

File #: 17-0592, Version: 1

SP 2017-14, Somerset Academy South, 19620 Pines Boulevard, site plan amendment with special exception. (Joseph)

SUMMARY EXPLANATION AND BACKGROUND:

Civica Group, agent for Somerset Academy, is requesting a site plan amendment with special exception to convert the existing building on site into a K-8 charter school with associated parking, landscape, signage, and traffic circulation changes. The proposed Somerset Academy South campus is located at 19620 Pines Boulevard.

Background and Proposed Use

The proposed site had been previously approved and constructed as a 27,300-square foot multi-purpose building (FKA 196 Plaza). A portion of the building recently housed a school use. Somerset is under contract to purchase the property and plans to convert the site into a K-8 campus.

Site Plan

The proposed site plan consists of improvements to fully repurpose this site into a school campus. Improvements include the following:

- Site changes -
 - Removal of parking along the existing paving on the northeast side of the property to accommodate a student pick up / drop off area, an artificial turf play area, and a proposed sport court. In addition, modifications to the parking lot to the south of the existing building to create a bus staging lane with protective bollards.
 - 94 parking spaces will remain on site where 78 spaces are required based on State Law (SREF)
 - Fire hydrant and fire department connection relocations as required by the Fire Prevention Bureau. Addition of fire lanes as required.
 - The installation of a 6-foot high perimeter fencing and gates to secure the campus
 - Gates to be located within the northern parking drive aisles to secure the site during off-hours.
 - Associated landscape changes because of the proposed changes. Most existing landscape will remain.
 - Trees and shrubs have been added around the building
 - New trees include Wild Tamarind, Royal Palms, Montgomery Palms, and White Birds of Paradise.
- Building Changes

- Interior improvements to convert the building into classrooms, cafeteria facilities, and administration offices.
- The addition of a building sign which reads, "Somerset Academy" in silver pin mounted lettering on each the north and south building elevation. Current Code allows for up to 120 square feet of signage for this freestanding site. No monument sign is proposed at this time.
- No changes are proposed to the building architecture or colors as part of this application.

Special Exception

Section 155.283 of the Code of Ordinances requires schools to seek special exception approval for the establishment of new schools. Special exception approval for schools may be granted by the Planning and Zoning Board.

The applicant provides a letter addressing the City standards of approval for a Special Exception application:

Standard: The proposed use is compatible with the existing natural environment and community character of the properties within the immediate neighborhood.

Applicant Reply: The proposed use will be an expansion to an already approved existing educational facility that was previously approved by the Municipality.

Staff Comment: The site has been used as a school in the past. The proposed school use is compatible with the underlying land use and zoning designations. The school will have the ability to serve the surrounding neighborhood. Somerset Academy currently operates a successful campus within the City. This school will help to alleviate demand on the north campus.

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

Applicant Reply: The use is deemed desirable and provides much needed student stations to the community.

Staff Comment: School use is permitted in the B-3 zoning district within the City. Somerset Academy currently operates two successful campus in Pembroke Pines and is opening this campus to help alleviate increasing enrollment.

Standard: 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.

Applicant Reply: The site plan proposes additional Landscape buffers as well as newly improved landscape design.

Staff Comment: The proposed building currently exists and only minor modifications are being made to the site. The current building and site meets all setback, buffer, and landscape requirements. The school plans to enhance the internal landscape on the property as part of this application.

Standard: 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.

Applicant Reply: There is surplus parking for this site and has no parking limitations.

Staff Comment: The proposed school parking meets State of Florida standards for parking of Charter Schools. Both the Traffic Study and the Traffic Operations Plan have been reviewed and accepted by the Development Review Committee (DRC).

Standard: 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.

Applicant Reply: The school has complied with all provisions set by the City of Pembroke Pines through Traffic Study Analysis and Traffic Operations Plan submitted by their Traffic Engineer and reviewed by City of Pembroke Pines.

Staff Comment: City staff has reviewed the proposed traffic study and traffic operations plan and has no objections.

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

Applicant Reply: The proposed use will be an expansion to an already approved educational facility that was previously approved by the Municipality.

Staff Comment: The proposed school plan property exceeds minimum size requirements as established within the code. The site also complies with all zoning Code related requirements as required by the Code. Any expansion of this use would require future staff review and Board approvals.

Traffic Study / Traffic Operations Plan:

As part of the special exception process, the applicant is required to provide staff with a traffic analysis of the surrounding roadways. The provided traffic analysis shows the impacts on each adjacent roadways and intersections during peak periods. It should be noted that traffic impacts on the adjacent roads are significantly reduced during school hours and the release times are much

earlier than standard peak PM times. Furthermore, schools typically generate no trips on weekends unless there is an extracurricular event taking place. Highlights to the associated traffic operations plan for the south campus include the following:

- The applicant agreed to restrict the property to a maximum cap of 1,000 students.
 - Somerset will predominately house students from grades K-3. This new campus is designed to relieve the existing north campus at 20801-20805 Johnson Street which will now predominantly serve grades 4-12.
 - Somerset has acknowledged that any increase in number of students from this cap would need to be reviewed and approved by the City through the special exception process. By providing this age range on campus, Somerset believes that the time for pickup and drop off will move faster most of the students of this age need less time to load.
- Ingress to this site will be provided only from the existing drive off 196th Avenue. Egress will be permitted from the school from both existing openings Pines Boulevard and 196th Avenue.
- The provision for staggered start times with analysis of loading times:
 - Loading time Shift #1 - 8:00 AM
 - 600 students expected - 492 private automobiles* - Estimated 20 minutes for shift #1
 - Loading Shift #2 (Drop-off) - 8:30 AM
 - 400 students expected - 328 private automobiles* - Estimated 12 minutes for shift #2

*It is presumed within the study that 18% of the children will arrive via bus or private van.

- Elementary school stacking on site allows for up to 47 vehicles from pickup / drop off area (See page A1) to 196th Avenue.
- Applicant provides a study which shows observations from an equivalent school (Miami Heritage School - 600 students). The analysis shows that the 47 spaces of stacking proposed for the Somerset South site is in line with the maximum stacking numbers shown at this school.
- Gates on site will open 30-45 minutes before the earliest start of school.
- Plan designation of pickup / drop off areas on site.
- Provisions providing for police, crossing guard and on-site traffic control personnel during pickup/drop off.
- Designation of employee parking in areas in certain parking areas which would severely restrict on-site stacking.

Staff has reviewed the site plan improvements and the traffic analysis provided by the applicant and has no objections. Staff therefore recommends approval of this application.

Staff Recommendation: Approval, subject to the following:

- 1. Somerset agreeing to work with the City to re-evaluate the Traffic Operations Plan should modifications need to be made post implementation. This would occur if the proposed traffic operations plan was found by staff to not be effective in relieving congestion on public roads.**
- 2. Each building sign to be limited to 60 square feet in area.**