

LOUDOUN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION

Commission Permit (CMPT-2023-0006)

Dulles North HS & Elementary School

June 27, 2023

Proposal

The Loudoun County School Board (LCSB) seeks approval of Commission Permit (CMPT 2023-006) to allow a future Dulles North High School (HS-14) and future Elementary School to be co-located with Watson Mountain Middle School (previously known as MS-14) on approximately 173 acres of land situated on the west side of Evergreen Mills Road, south of Red Hill Road. The Property is more particularly described as MCPI: 242-18-1260 (172.911 ac.), in the Blue Ridge Election District (2011) and Little River Election District (2022). The Red Hill Community borders the site to the north and west, The Grant at Willowsford borders the site to the south and Evergreen Mills Road borders the site to the east. On the site, the proposed High School will be generally located to the southwest of the Middle School and the proposed Elementary School will be generally located to the northeast of the Middle School.

The Adopted LCSB Capital Improvement Program (FY2024-2029) plans the opening of HS-14 in Fall of 2028. The intent is to utilize HS-14 for grades 9-12. The Elementary School is intended for grades K-5. The property is zoned A-3 (Agricultural/Residential) with a small area of TR-3UBF (Transition Residential - 3, Upper Broad Run/Upper Foley) and contains approximately 6 acres of minor floodplain, Floodplain Overlay District (FOD). Approximately 17 acres of the property (northeast corner of the property adjacent to Evergreen Mills Road/Ryan Road/Red Hill Road intersection) is located within the Reservoir Protection Area. Portions of the property contain noncontiguous patches of moderately steep slopes totaling approximately 3 acres.

Continued residential growth in the County has created the need for the planning and construction of additional public schools. Vacant land suitable for school sites, with access to public utilities, has become significantly more difficult to acquire and most school sites obtained by dedication from developers have already been developed. For this reason, Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) has been prioritizing co-location where possible to maximize the potential of existing LCPS properties. The program for the proposed High School includes a multi-story building up to 350,000 sq. ft. in size with a student capacity of 2,100 students and includes an expanded stadium and gymnasium. The expanded stadium and gymnasium capacities are a first of their kind for LCPS and are planned to host future regional events. The proposed Elementary School will be up to 120,000 sq. ft. in size with a student capacity of 960 students. Each school will have associated parking and recreation fields.

Identification of HS-14 as a feature on the public facilities map in the Loudoun County 2019 General Plan (2019 General Plan), as a part of CPAM-2023-00XX, allows the school to be open by the planned 2028-2029 academic year. In addition to the legislative approval, the site will need to be designed and engineered; a site plan must also be reviewed and approved. The general time frame for design, site plan review, the construction bid process, and construction of HS-14 is approximately three and a half (3.5) years. Identification of the Elementary School site as a feature

on the public facilities map in the 2019 General Plan allows the school to be planned and open in a future academic year yet to be identified. A site plan is required and must be reviewed and approved by the County before any future construction could begin.

Background

The LCPS Dulles North Planning District is one of the fastest growing areas in the County. In this area of the County, the scarcity of developable land, with utilities, makes locating schools near the population they will serve, challenging. The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors and the Loudoun County School Board executed a Contract of Sale with Timber Ridge at Hartland, LLC in December 2019, for the purchase of 172.9 acres of land (MCPI 242-18-1260 (171.0 ac.) and MCPI 242-28-8988 (1.9 ac.)) located on the west side of Evergreen Mills Road, southwest of the intersection of Evergreen Mills Road with Red Hill Road/Ryan Road. LCPS conducted feasibility studies for the property including archaeological, environmental, traffic, geotechnical, and similar preliminary assessments to ensure the property may be developed for the intended use. The study period ended in December 2020, with closing on the property occurring in January 2021.

The property is zoned A-3 in the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance (Revised 1993 ZO). Public schools are a by-right use in the A-3 District. The Middle School location was approved as a part of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM-2020-0001) on December 1, 2020. CPAM-2020-0001 also amended the 2019 General Plan to allow extension of central utilities to serve public uses in the Rural Policy Area (RPA) adjacent to the Transition Policy Area (TPA). The Site Plan (STPL-2021-0033) for the Middle School was approved May 25, 2022. The Construction Plans and Profiles (CPAP-2021-0018) for the Middle School roadway improvements were approved May 23, 2022. At the February 7, 2023, business meeting, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted to approve the Red Hill Community CPAM (CPAM-2020-0002), that includes the LCPS property, to 1) move the area from the RPA to the TPA; 2) designate the Red Hill Community as a new TPA subarea; and 3) change the area designation from the Rural North Place Type to the Transition Large Lot Neighborhood Place Type in the 2019 General Plan. The CPAM will update the land use policies and maps of the 2019 General Plan and the Loudoun County 2019 Countywide Transportation Plan (2019 CTP) in order to address these changes. Additionally, the A-3 zoning district is anticipated to remain as a ‘Legacy’ district in draft text of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite (ZOAM-2020-0001).

Loudoun Water is the established service provider for the County’s central water and sewer system. As such, Loudoun Water has the established infrastructure, resources, and experience to operate efficient and effective water and sewer service. Water and sewer lines will be located on-site with the connection of Watson Mountain Middle School to Loudoun Water.

Compatibility with the 2019 General Plan

The property is presently approved for school purposes (Watson Mountain Middle School) that were approved via CPAM-2020-0001. Watson Mountain Middle School is under construction with a planned opening in Fall 2024. The addition of the High School and Elementary School enhances the accessibility for community use and ensures that adequate public facilities are available to meet the increased demands of development in the area. The layout of the site coupled with

existing natural features will ensure compatibility with the surrounding uses. In addition to the existing natural features and the proposed site layout, the Commission Permit plan complies with the Revised 1993 ZO development standards, including landscape buffers along property boundaries. More specifically, a Type II roadway corridor landscape buffer along Red Hill Road and Evergreen Mills Road and a Type B landscape buffer along property boundaries adjacent to residential uses. In addition to meeting the buffering and screening requirements of the 1993 Revised ZO, public schools provide an enhanced buffer of an additional five (5) evergreen trees per one hundred (100) linear feet along all side yard and rear yard buffers adjoining existing residential uses. In addition to the enhanced buffer, LCPS anticipates providing a 100-foot setback, particularly along property boundaries adjoining residential uses, to maintain the character and intent envisioned for the TPA. The proposed location of the stadium is shielded from the residential properties to the west and north by the proposed configuration of the High School building and Watson Mountain Middle School, respectively. The residential properties to the south are projected to be more than 600' from the stadium. Lighting for the property will be designed to minimize any impact to adjacent properties. School facilities are traditionally constructed in residential areas because they serve residential communities and are considered to be a compatible use. The 2019 General Plan anticipates public facilities to be part of the preferred mix of uses in the Transition Large Lot Neighborhood placetype.

Public Outreach

LCPS routinely hosts community meetings to provide a forum to share information on funded, planned and proposed school capital projects. To focus the discussion and public involvement, the meetings include a general overview of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Capital Asset Preservation Program budgets and then spotlight a specific geographic area of Loudoun. This property is in the Dulles North Planning District. LCPS provided a status update on the Watson Mountain Middle School CIP project and the planned development of HS-14 and future Elementary School at the Dulles North Planning District Community Information Meeting on April 20, 2023. The meeting was in the auditorium of Brambleton Middle School (23070 Learning Circle, Ashburn). LCPS staff has also met with representatives of Fleetwood Farm Nursery and Washington Immanuel Presbyterian Church prior to the Commission Permit application submission.

Transportation and Parking

LCPS committed to bring forward the full traffic impact study (TIS) as part of the Commission Permit application. Typically, the full TIS is provided as a requirement for site plan. A detailed traffic analysis has been prepared for the proposed 2,100 student capacity High School and 960 student capacity Elementary School. The traffic study scoping document was established in coordination with and approved by the Loudoun County Department of Transportation and Capital Infrastructure (DTCI). The study analyzed the existing and projected future traffic conditions, specifically for 10 intersections within the study area. The proposed co-located site proposes to add two entrances on Evergreen Mills Road in addition to the approved entrance on Red Hill Road. All three vehicle entrances are critical for site circulation and the operational success and safety of the schools. Given the staggered start and end times for the Elementary and High School, and

previously approved Middle School, the traffic flow for the schools is anticipated to have minimal overlap.

School bus service will be provided to each School:

- HS-14 (2,100 student capacity) – 25 buses
- Future ES (960 student capacity) – 16 buses
- Watson Mountain Middle School (1,445 student capacity) – 26 buses

The traffic counts utilized for the TIS were conducted on a typical school weekday. Turning movement counts (TMC) and 24-hour volume data were collected on Thursday, December 8, 2022. TMC data for the intersection of Red Hill Rd and Stone School Ln, were collected on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, due to the original data collection camera malfunctioning. LCPS and DTCI staff have confirmed that neither day was a snow day and LCPS schools were open and in regular session. The traffic counts meet the County requirements for traffic data collection which provide, in part, that counts cannot be collected when schools are closed. DTCI collected the traffic count and intersection data and provided it to LCPS for use in the TIS.

The analysis provided within the TIS anticipates all site entrances will operate at an acceptable level of service with recommended improvements. The site entrances are identified as: 1) approved full-access intersection at Red Hill Road, 2) Right-in/right-out (RIRO) intersection at Evergreen Mills Rd, and 3) signalized full-access intersection at Evergreen Mills Rd. The full design and extent of the RIRO and signalized intersection will be part of a future site plan or construction plan and profile land development application. Additionally, the TIS recommends that Evergreen Mills Road, in proximity to the property, be built to its ultimate condition (4-lane median divided roadway with a trail on both sides and turn lanes where needed) in accordance with the 2019 CTP. This recommendation is to accommodate site generated traffic and the year-over-year growth in background traffic from other developments. The full extent of those improvements will be designed and provided, as required, to the County for review with a future site plan or construction plan and profile land development application.

For HS-14 and future ES, the planned paved parking will meet or exceed the requirements of the Revised 1993 ZO. Fall is the largest potential peak parking need (aside from graduation) particularly due to football games. It is highly unlikely that another event of any kind would be scheduled on a Friday night running concurrently with football games. Events with the largest anticipated attendance such as regional sporting events and graduation are typically scheduled outside of peak traffic times or on weekends as to not interfere with the normal operation of the schools. Additionally, the planned and approved paved parking spaces associated with the High School and Middle School are anticipated to serve the transportation needs linked with these events. An event traffic management plan is included with the TIS.

Landscaping, Screening and Buffering

Per the Revised 1993 ZO and Section 5-666, a 20-foot (width) Type B buffer is required adjacent to residential properties. A Type B buffer is defined as having eighty (80) plant units per 100 linear feet. Public schools are required to provide an additional five (5) evergreen trees per 100 linear

feet to the required buffer to enhance the screening and buffering requirements. To satisfy the buffer requirements, LCPS will either maintain the existing mature vegetation along these boundaries or provide the additional plantings. Areas identified as meeting the requirements of the buffer with existing mature vegetation will be preserved as a tree conservation area. A 15-foot (width) Type 2 buffer will be provided along the property frontage adjacent to 2019 CTP roadways. In addition to the enhanced screening and buffering, LCPS anticipates providing a 100-foot setback, particularly along property boundaries adjoining residential uses, to maintain the character and intent envisioned for the TPA. Furthermore, LCPS is evaluating the possibility of providing a berm with landscaping along property boundaries adjacent to residential uses. The addition of a berm will need to be determined as part of a future site plan or other land development application.

Noise

The primary noises associated with School facilities are generated from picking up and dropping off students and from outside athletic activities. The stadium, as mentioned above, is shielded from the nearest residential properties due to its proposed location relative to the High School building, Watson Mountain Middle School and other athletic facilities. The athletic facilities are significantly separated, to the extent possible, from the nearest residential properties. An enhanced evergreen buffer and setbacks are planned between the school uses and surrounding properties.

Lighting

A total of five High School athletic facilities (tennis courts, stadium, artificial turf field, baseball and softball fields) are planned for lighting. The building lights will be fully shielded lighting fixtures and directed inward and downward toward the interior of the property. Lighting of School facilities is required to provide visibility in the parking lots and around the immediate School buildings for safety and security purposes. The lighted playing fields and stadium will be designed and positioned to ensure lighting will not adversely impact surrounding properties. In addition, the athletic field lighting will incorporate a reflector technology system that directs light onto the field, minimizes glare and spillage, and reduces energy and maintenance costs. All lighting on the property must comply with County lighting regulations.

Natural and Historic Features

The natural features of the site will be altered as a result of school site construction. The layout has taken into consideration the natural features including the minor floodplain and wetland areas. The 2019 General Plan recommended 50-foot floodplain conservation buffer has been provided, with noted minor encroachment. Archaeological studies have been conducted on the Property as part of the Middle School project. There are no resources that are considered to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and no further archeological work is anticipated. As part of the buffering and screening requirements, LCPS will maintain existing mature vegetation along property boundaries where possible.

No adverse impacts to environmentally sensitive land, rare or endangered plant/animal species habitat, and water or air quality are anticipated. Review by the State Department of Conservation and Recreation, as part of the Middle School project, found no documented natural heritage

resources in the project area and the rare and endangered species survey conducted on the Property found no species and low probability for occurrence.

Sustainable Design

The Loudoun County School Board, as a goal for design, construction, renovation and operation of all LCPS public facilities strives to meet or exceed the criteria of nationally recognized programs for measuring energy efficiency such as ENERGY STAR, LEED, Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) and Green Globe.

Public Welfare, Convenience & Employment Opportunities

The proposed Schools will serve a large area of Central Loudoun and colocation will provide for the convenience and welfare of the student population and community. Their proximities will also offer efficient transportation services between the schools. Police protection and fire and rescue service will be provided through the County and the volunteer fire and rescue companies.

The availability of an excellent education system and adequate facilities promote the location and relocation of businesses to Loudoun County, thereby positively influencing employment opportunities and economic activity. The proposed High School and future Elementary School are anticipated to provide hundreds of new jobs in addition to the anticipated employment opportunities projected with Watson Mountain Middle School.

Construction Traffic

The construction entrance is anticipated to be at the southernmost site entrance onto Evergreen Mills Road to minimize proximity to Watson Mountain Middle School traffic. Construction traffic would travel on major roadways where possible and not go through interior neighborhood streets. The project will adhere to all regulations set forth in the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook with special attention to be given to keeping public roads clean (keeping dirt and tracking off the roads). Loudoun County Public Schools will collaborate with our contractors to minimize heavy construction traffic during peak traffic periods and request that significant deliveries arrive prior to or after the peak school bus routing times.

Conclusion

The proposed public school Commission Permit is consistent with the policies of the County's Adopted Comprehensive Plan. Specifically:

- The School Board has determined the need for a High School and Elementary School in the Dulles North Area to serve the growing population.
- The proposed site is located at the focus of the existing and potential future attendance area, which is planned for continued growth. The 2019 General Plan policies recognize the need to provide a full complement of public uses to serve residential communities.
- Safe and convenient access will be provided to the site from Evergreen Mills Road, a major collector, and Red Hill Road, a minor collector. For complete transparency, the traffic

impact study has been submitted to the County as part of the Commission Permit application. The improvements identified in the TIS will be designed and implemented with a future site plan or construction plan and profile land development application.

- The proposed development incorporates planning goals related to elements of Green Infrastructure, including environmentally sensitive areas, incorporation of indigenous vegetation into proposed buffers, use of low-impact design techniques, and the use of sustainable design measures.
- The proposed site will be served by public sewer and water and will have all utilities needed to support the proposed uses.
- The proposed uses are compatible with the surrounding properties and land uses. Buffers will be provided along the property boundaries. Existing trees will be utilized as a part of the buffers to the extent practical. School building design will incorporate features to provide an aesthetically pleasing appearance. Proposed building, parking and security lighting will be cutoff and shielded, directed downward and toward the interior of the property.
- The proposed school use will comply with the zoning standards of the A-3 Zoning District as well as the public-school performance standards contained in Section 5-666 of the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance. These performance standards dictate the development standards for public schools and address all aspects of development including utilities, lighting, landscaping, setbacks, noise, stormwater management, building design, environmental aspects, and transportation.
- Overall, the proposed location, character, and extent of the proposed use is in substantial accord with the County's Adopted Comprehensive Plan and will meet a critical service need. Your favorable consideration is respectfully requested.