

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION
Building and Planning Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: 250 Haverford Road, Wynnewood, Penn Wynne Elementary School, Ward 14

Prepared By: Chris Leswing, Director, Building and Planning Department

Date: June 5, 2020

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

To amend a condition of approval related to the time in which the modular classrooms may remain on the site.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

The Board of Commissioners must review and render decisions on all requests to amend conditions of approval.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

N/A

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

The Board of Commissioners approved a Waiver of Land Development Plan on March 16, 2016. The Plan showed the installation of a 4,743-square foot modular building on the property containing four classrooms. The Board also approved a Conditional Use application to hold the ten (10) parking spaces required for the classrooms in reserve.

The following condition was imposed on the 2016 Waiver of Land Development Plan:

- The modular classroom shall be removed from the site within two years of its installation. The applicant may seek an extension to this deadline by submitting a request to the Board of Commissioners prior to the two-year expiration date.

The expiration date by which the classrooms were required to be removed from the site was August 25, 2018. On July 18, 2018 the Board of Commissioners approved the following amended language:

- The modular classroom shall be removed from the site by June 30, 2020. The applicant may seek an extension of this deadline by submitting a request to the Board of Commissioners sixty days prior to the expiration date. In addition, if necessary, the application fee for an additional extension in two years shall be waived.

The applicant seeks to again amend the condition above to allow the classrooms to remain on the site for an additional three years or until June 30, 2023.

In addition, the amendment being sought by the applicant there are currently three relevant pending land development plans for Penn Wynne Elementary which are outlined below:

Application 3862 – Plan 1: Tentative Sketch Application (expires 7/31/2020) **By Right Plan**

- Removal of the existing modular building classrooms;
- Installation of 55 parking spaces along Suffolk Lane;
- Construction of one 4,400 sq. ft. hard surface play area;
- Installation of 30 parking spaces along Trent Road;
- Installation of 10 parking spaces currently held in reserve near the intersection of Drayton Lane and Haverford Road;
- Construction of a concrete landing connecting to porous paths on the north side of the school building,
- Construction of several porous asphalt pathways; and
- Conversion of some existing pedestrian paths to porous asphalt.

Applications 3863 & 3863C – Plan 2: Tentative Sketch & Conditional Use Application (expires 1/29/21) Must have ZHB before proceeding

- Removal of the existing modular building classrooms; and
- Construction of two hard surface play areas including:
 - One play area is proposed to be 5,600 sq. ft. located on the west side of the existing school building; and
 - Second play area is proposed to be 567 sq. ft. located on the west side of the existing school building.
- The plan also shows the installation of 10 parking spaces currently held in reserve near the intersection of Drayton Lane and Haverford Road.

The applicant seeks Conditional Use approval to hold 15 parking spaces and the required stormwater management facility for those spaces in reserve near the current location of the existing modular classroom building. The applicant also seeks Zoning Hearing Board approval on October 22, 2020 to not install 25 of 50 required parking spaces.

Applications 3864 & 3864C – Plan 3: Tentative Sketch & Conditional Use Application (expires 1/29/21) Must have ZHB before proceeding

- Removal of the existing modular building classrooms;
- Construction of two hard surface play areas including:
 - One play area is proposed to be 2,527 sq. ft. located on the west side of the existing school
 - Second play area is proposed to be 4,400 sq. ft. located on the west side of the existing school building.
- The plan also shows the installation of 10 parking spaces currently held in reserve near the intersection of Drayton Lane and Haverford Road.

The applicant seeks Conditional Use approval to hold 15 parking spaces in reserve and the required stormwater management facility for those spaces in reserve near the current location of the modular classroom building. The applicant also seeks Zoning Hearing Board approval on October 22, 2020 to not install 25 of 50 required parking spaces.

In 2016 LMSD was granted Waiver of Land Development Approval to install the modular classrooms. The land development approval was accompanied by Conditional Use Approval to hold the additional parking required for the modular classrooms in reserve. The traffic study that accompanied the

Conditional Use Approval included a footnote that a small number of off hours cleaning staff and visitors were not included in the required parking calculations. The Conditional Use approval did not require parking to address staff/visitors identified in the Traffic Study footnote.

It has come to the Township's attention that additional students and staff have been added to the school since the approval of the modular classrooms in 2016. The additional students and staff were the result of internal facility modernizations to address enrollment growth and did not result from external facility expansion. As a result of ongoing internal modernization since 2016 the school is deficient in required parking per the zoning code. The parking zoning violation is not directly related to the modular classrooms but to overall student and facility growth on the entire campus. It should be noted that the parking deficiency resulting from increased student enrollment will be likely be resolved in 2022 with the shifting of an entire grade from Penn Wynne Elementary to the new middle school.

After being notified by the Township of the parking discrepancy LMSD submitted the three plans to correct the identified parking deficiency. Two of the plans require Zoning Heard Board approval and cannot be heard until this fall when required traffic studies are prepared after school is in session. The remaining 'By Right' plan proposes addressing the parking deficiency by constructing a large parking area on the back field near where the modular classrooms are currently located. Staff has not identified any current significant impacts upon the surrounding community resulting from the parking deficiency.

The Township is required to act on the 'By Right' plan by July 31st unless the School District grants an extension for the Township to act. Staff, the School District and the Penn Wynne community all would prefer the opportunity to develop an alternative plan that preserves the existing field/open space along Trent Road while providing additional parking and modest building expansion opportunity in a more appropriate area of the campus.

Regulating the appropriate location of future modernizations is central to resolving ongoing issues with institutional educational uses within the Township. Staff has been working with Saint Josephs University to develop a zoning and planning solution to similar issues on their campus, with the intent being that these solutions can be applied to other schools. Staff is planning to present solutions to address township-wide institutional educational issues this fall. Staff anticipates that the strategies developed to address Saint Josephs University's modernization may be applied to resolve issues at Penn Wynne.

V. Impact On Township Finances:

Successful resolution of this application as outlined in this memo has no impact on Township finances. However, denial of the request to extend the modular classroom approval could result in litigation.

VI. Staff Recommendation:

It is staff's recommendation that the Township extend the approval of the modular classrooms for two years (June 30, 2022), provided that the School District continue to address the identified parking deficiency at the school through the Zoning Hearing Board approval process and that the School District further agree to extend the period of time for the Township to approve the 'By Right' plan (3862) until June 30, 2022.