

BLUE ASH BOARD OF SITE ARRANGEMENT

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ITEM 1. – Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Paul Collett called the regular meeting of the Board of Site Arrangement to order at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, September 12, 2011 and requested a roll call.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Collett, Jr., Julie Brook, Mark Kirby, Terry Peck and Marc Sirkin

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant to City Manager Kelly Osler, Deputy City Solicitor Bryan Pacheco, Assistant Community Development Director Dan Johnson and Administrative Clerk Traci Smith

ITEM 2. – Approval of Minutes

The Board waived the reading and approved the minutes of the Board of Site Arrangement regular meeting of August 8, 2011.

ITEM 3. – New Hearings

a. 6100 Hagewa Drive – Maple Dale, Sycamore School District

Approval of school facilities site including Maple Dale Elementary and the Sycamore Schools District Office

PRESENT: Michael Boron, CR Architecture + Design - Applicant

Chair Paul Collett introduced the agenda item.

Mike Boron, project architect, introduced the project on behalf of the Sycamore School District. He explained that the process for conceptual design of the Maple Dale site began about 18 months ago. They explored multiple options for the location of the District Offices on and off of the site, but eventually decided that including it on-site was the best alternative relative to construction and operating costs and building the two buildings simultaneously.

He explained that there was a “school planning team” composed of School administrators and staff, parents, and neighbors. This final plan was developed over a period of about six months with the overall goal of safety. The proposed location of the elementary building is, in part, to allow reuse of the existing gym and also to allow the existing school to be maintained in operation during construction of the new building.

Maintaining the school on the east side of the site resulted in locating the District Office building on the west side of the site. The plans include a geothermal well field underneath the existing ball field, which will then be restored to its existing condition. The geothermal well field will be shared between the elementary school and the District Office, which will reduce the operating costs of both facilities.

The District Office is on the south side of the site to avoid the geothermal well field and as close as possible to the elementary school building to facilitate shared parking spaces.

The site is split by a fence to help control traffic. All of the busses will enter the site from Zig Zag Road and will queue in an area that also serves as a playground during the day. The gate will be closed during the day so that no vehicles can enter that

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area during the day. Staff, parents, and visitors will enter the site from Hagewa Drive and be able to park either at the District Offices or at the elementary school building.

There is one bus with half-day kindergartners that will come in from the west side of the site during the day, which will allow the playground where the other busses normally park to be in use during the day.

The elementary school is oriented east-west situation to take advantage of natural light. The site is designed to LEED principles, but the District is not seeking LEED certification because of the additional cost of doing so. There will be many outdoor learning spaces, play area, and other spaces where the kids can get outside of the building during the day. Many parents like the "California concept" of the existing school, but do not like that the kids have to go outside between sections of the building.

The District Office will primarily be occupied by the current staff at the Cooper Road facility. Some occupants will be transferred out of the current Maple Dale building. The District technology office will also be brought in to the new District Office building. The day-to-day operations of the District will occur in the new building. There are also student-based functions that do take place in the District Office building, including disciplinary hearings, student art displays, student registration, Board meetings that are attended by civics classes, curriculum development meetings with staff from around the District. The Office of Student Services is there, which serves special needs students and gifted and talented classes.

The design is intended to limit cut-through ability. There is a small jog in the driveway to encourage staff and parents to drive more slowly through the site.

In discussions with staff and neighbors, it was largely unanimous that they wanted a residential feel. The one-story building is better for young students. The building will have residential materials, including brick to match the existing gym and a shingle roof with a low slope. There is a tower to identify the main entrance to the building.

The District Office building will have the same materials as the elementary building, which lends to the campus-like feel of the site. The building is much smaller in area, however.

Mr. Collett summarized the public comment procedure and noted that this is not a public hearing.

Marc Sirkin asked about noise from the geothermal system. Mr. Boron answered that there is almost no noise because the mechanical elements are either underground or inside of the buildings. The only external site utilities are a generator and a transformer. There will not be any exterior equipment at the District Office building.

Mr. Collett summarized that the project is an upgraded site with traditional and nontraditional school uses. Dan Johnson clarified that the proposed uses on the site are permitted uses by the Zoning Code.

Julie Brook asked about a landscaping plan that was different from the one in the submitted materials. Mr. Boron explained that the plan she referred to was

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submitted by a neighbor, not the applicant. He also explained that the landscaping plan on the presentation board is not as up-to-date as the plans that were submitted with the application.

Mr. Sirkin asked about the Sycamore School District levy that related to the school plans. Bryan Pacheco answered that the purpose of the levy was not an issue for the BSA to consider.

Mr. Collett asked if there are any issues that the plan has not addressed. Mr. Johnson answered that the plans are sufficient for the Board to decide, but that they are not as detailed as will be required for the Building Permit. The only items requiring further consideration are the subject of the BZA hearing that is set for tonight.

Mr. Collett asked for comments from residents.

Attorney John Stillpass explained that he represents residents of Montgomery and Blue Ash, including residents of Hagewa Drive adjacent to the subject site. He clarified that the materials he distributed to the Board address both the BSA and the BZA agenda items. His clients contend that the District Office building is not a permitted use per the Blue Ash Zoning Code in an R-1 Zoning District. He explained why they do not believe that the Code permits the District Office building or use. He noted that the Code does not allow the Board of Site Arrangement to approve a use that would result in a violation of the Zoning Code and asked the Board to uphold the Zoning Code by denying the application.

He noted that all districts other than the R Districts permit offices.

He explained that his clients do not believe that the proposed site plan adequately protects the adjacent residential properties. He referenced an illustration showing what the screening would look like based upon the proposed landscaping plan. Julie Brook verified that he was proposing the alternate landscaping plan. Mark Kirby noted that the plans submitted with the application are compliant.

Answering a question, Mr. Johnson explained that the Code requires a dense screen within four years of planting, if a buffer is required. He also noted that the Board may condition any approval on additional screening such as that proposed in the alternate landscaping plan submitted by Mr. Stillpass.

Mr. Stillpass asked that the lighting in and outside of the buildings be on motion sensors to eliminate the possibility of human error; so that no one leaves lighting on that may disturb adjacent property owners at night. Mr. Johnson noted that the Board does have the ability to condition an approval in this way if it feels that such additional protection is necessary to protect adjacent properties.

Terry Peck asked how many properties are affected by the site lighting. Mr. Stillpass counted 17 adjacent properties.

Mr. Stillpass asked the Board to include a condition that any additional machinery be located towards the inside of the site, away from adjacent residence.

Mr. Stillpass asked that the Board not allow any changes to the stormwater design for the site because they are pleased that it is appropriate as submitted. Mr. Kirby explained that the site is bound by other laws that will not allow it to be changed in a way that is detrimental to any off-site properties.

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Lou Hager is a resident on Hagewa Drive. He noted that he has concerns for safety, public welfare, property values, and private enjoyment of neighboring properties. He explained that the landscaping and fencing on the west side of the site has not been adequately maintained. He asked that the Board require screening in this area of the property. He expressed concern about additional lighting in this area also. He expressed concern that the fencing is insufficient to prevent balls from the adjacent fields and asked the Board to consider better fencing. He asked that the grading be done carefully particularly where the site meets with the Green School property.

Kathleen Meyers is a resident on Hagewa Drive. She believes that the District Office should not be permitted in the Residential district. She noted concerns about how students walk to the property and believes that the sidewalks should be relocated for safety. She noted that the creek area of the site is currently dark; there is no light. She noted that the parking lots will look nice when they are new, but that they will degrade over time and look bad. If the District Office is permitted, then the parking should be underground. She expressed concern that staff members who are fired at the District Office will not be concerned about safety as they leave the site. She noted that the fencing and landscaping along the west property line is not good. She asked that a gate be installed on the Hagewa entrance to the property that could be closed on weekends and at 4:30 on weekdays to ensure that traffic outside of normal school hours uses the other entrance.

Dick Huskey lives on Myerdale Drive. He described Maple Dale as a "neighborhood school" that is designed for kids to walk to from the adjacent neighborhoods. He agreed with prior stated concerns about stormwater from the Green School site. He said that residents in the immediate neighborhoods did not want an office building on the site.

Prem Juneja lives on Stonehenge Drive. He does not want the office building on the property adjacent to his residence. He is concerned about the view from his windows, which face the school site. He is concerned about stormwater problems, particularly from the Green School site. He does not want the property values to go down. He stated that the issue of the District Office building was not included in the information with the Bond issue that the voters approved.

Colleen Greissing is a Blue Ash resident running for the Sycamore School Board. She questioned how the plans got this far without the question of having the District Office in the R-1 District having come up. She noted that she would be outraged if this were in her neighborhood and because of the cost. She noted that many office spaces in Blue Ash are available for lease and that's where the District Office should go; she found 20 suitable building spaces and space is available at \$11 per square foot, including maintenance. She noted that the District Office has a loading dock and that it should not be permitting in this neighborhood.

Laura Drake believes that this approval will permit a commercial building for a horrible neighbor; the Sycamore School does a horrible job of maintaining its properties. Trees that were planted at the Green School are all dead. The District does not water the landscaping. The neighbors will need to constantly complain and the District will not do anything to fix it. The Office building should not be permitted in a Residential District. Her two children who graduated from Sycamore never set foot in the District Offices. How can the office building have a residential feel when it has a loading dock? She said that Turner Construction lied about getting input from the neighbors on this design.

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Kathleen Meyers alleged that, if the function of the office building results in it being considered a “school” for zoning purposes, any school organization, including an online, “virtual” school could buy any property in a Residential zoning district and use the property for an office. She believes that an alumnus of Sycamore could use his or her house for an office under the same analysis.

Glenn Welch is a resident on Stonehenge Drive. He noted that he has a website about the Sycamore School District. He noted that the District has fewer students than in prior years, but in the number of teachers has increased. He said that Maple Dale and the District Office building are not necessary.

Kathy Kishpaugh lives on Fox Hollow Drive. She stated that she will be extremely disappointed in the Board if it votes to approve the School Board building. She does not think that the Zoning permits the office building.

Bart Choate lives on Stonehenge adjacent to the school property. He expressed concern about the office building. He does not see the need for a 60-car parking lot. He is concerned about lighting, including the intensity of the LED lighting.

Mr. Collett clarified the role of the BSA to review the site plan as presented by the applicant. The Board may condition an approval upon the items in the Staff Report and any items of concern raised at the meeting.

Tom Zitt lives on Castleford Lane next to the sidewalk that connects to the site. He is concerned about noise and lights from the site. He asked for additional landscaping, including a berm, to help buffer the site. He is concerned about the path of travel for walking students as they enter the site from that sidewalk in order to stay safe.

Ray Noschang lives on Castleford Lane. He is concerned about the landscaping and lighting adjacent to the parking lot. Mr. Kirby noted that the area adjacent to his property is in Montgomery and that Montgomery will review that portion of the site. Mr. Boron explained that the District agreed to satisfy the more strict standards for both communities, including for landscaping and lighting.

Ms. Brook asked Mr. Boron to explain the expected paths for student walkers. He explained that they thought it would be better to have the sidewalk on the south side of the driveway because it is on the same side of Hagewa Drive. He explained that the District cannot afford to install concrete sidewalks from all of the adjacent streets and sidewalks, but that they considered other types of paths that are not shown on the plan. Ms. Brook asked Mr. Boron to explain the flow of car traffic.

Ms. Brook asked why the District Office building is separate from the Maple Dale building. Mr. Boron explained that it is not as desirable to have the two in the same building and the layout of the site dictated that they be separated.

Dr. Keith Kelly asked Mr. Boron to clarify the student path of travel from Castleford Lane. Dr. Kelly explained that the District would like to include paths, but are currently constrained by the budget.

Ms. Brook asked about the landscaping. Mr. Boron explained that there is a lot of existing landscaping that is not detailed on the plans. He also noted that the budget does not allow a great deal more landscaping. He noted that the District Office building does not have a loading dock. The receiving area has no change in

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elevation and no dock door. This parking space will be used by the District to receive State testing materials to be distributed to the schools, which occurs 5-8 times per year. Dr. Kelly clarified that the District Office is not the central receiving area for all of the District's materials; the majority of items are delivered directly to the schools. Mr. Boron pointed out the storage area for the state testing materials, which is 90 square feet.

In answer to a question, Mr. Boron clarified that these buildings are being designed to LEED standards, but will not be certified. Mr. Kelly explained that the School Board decided not to seek LEED certification because of the additional cost to do so. Mr. Boron explained that the internal lights will be on motion and occupancy sensors. The exterior site lighting will turn off once the building system determines that the site is unoccupied. Exterior lighting will not be on motion sensors because there are too many animals. There will be minimal security lighting that stays on through the night.

Mr. Sirkin asked Mr. Kelly to describe the traffic pattern for the office building and about the number of evening meetings. Mr. Kelly answered that the staff, parents, students, and other small groups will meet when necessary. Mr. Boron noted that UPS, FedEx, and the district truck will park in front of the office building and deliveries are made through the front door which negates the need for any of those vehicles to back up. The Maple Dale building is being built for 500 students and approximately 80 staff. Mr. Boron explained that the parking lot at the Maple Dale building is approximately 6-18 feet lower than the rear yards of the properties on Castleford Lane.

Mr. Collett asked about stormwater detention. Mr. Boron explained the design for the site.

Terry Peck asked if there would be any irrigation. Mr. Boron answered "no."

In answer to a question, Mr. Johnson said he would notify the City's Property Maintenance staff about the alleged condition of the fence along the west property line. He explained that the School can be required to replace dead or missing landscaping elements that are part of an approved landscaping plan.

Mr. Collett asked how much of the traffic is new traffic, since some of the staff who will be housed at the new District Office is being moved from the current Maple Dale building. Mr. Kelly explained that almost all of the bus traffic will be removed from Hagewa as described earlier and that the Office of Student Services, Child Nutrition Department, and Central Registration. Nine of the 37 employees in the District Office will be coming from Maple Dale.

Mr. Johnson asked that the Board address any items of concern in detail as a condition to an approval so that he knows to look for them in the Building or Site Work Permit applications.

Ms. Brook is not satisfied that safety has been adequately addressed in the plan. She also noted that it is important to also discuss the conditions suggested in the Staff Report.

In answer to a question, Bryan Pacheco outlined why the District Office is a permitted use under the Zoning Code. He noted seven specific items that were mentioned in the applicant's earlier testimony showing that instruction would occur in the building: expulsion and suspension hearings, the student art display, student

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registration, a civics class attending a Board meeting, gifted and talented class instruction, curriculum discussions, and a child nutrition program. He noted that if one agreed with the definition provided by Mr. Stillpass, the Maple Dale building would not have a gym, cafeteria, or any other place where a teacher is not lecturing to a student or writing on a black board or white board. He also rejected the notion that any school could open in a Residential district. The definition of “public school” requires that it be operated by a public school district or a city, county, state, or federal government agency. He explained that the proposed buildings are permitted and the Zoning Code requires that the City allow the applicant to use the property as is permitted by the Code. Finally, he noted that, because the Blue Ash Code does permit schools in the R-1 District, then the argument that allowing a school at this site would negatively affect the quality of the residential areas does not have merit. The Code allows more than just single-family residences in residential districts.

Mr. Sirkin stated that he agrees that the sidewalk should be on the north side of the driveway. He also stated that he believes the School District has a right to build the office on the site.

Mr. Johnson confirmed that the finances of the applicant are not the concern of the Board. If the Board feels that a component is necessary of the site is necessary for approval, then he will look for it on the site plan.

Mr. Collett asked for a motion.

DECISION: Marc Sirkin moved, Julie Brook seconded to approve the application as submitted with the following conditions:

1. City Engineer to approve civil design for stormwater management
2. Driveway width and parking lot landscaping be permitted as indicated in the submittal, if the Board of Zoning Appeals grants the variance
3. Require dumpster enclosure to have an enclosure typical of a development in a non-residential district
4. Signs to satisfy Code
5. If Montgomery approves the plan, but requires changes to any design elements that are also within Blue Ash (such as lighting fixtures, sidewalk widths, building facades, etc.), and those design changes are equal to or more prohibitive than the plans approved by the Board of Site Arrangement, then the same design changes shall be required in Blue Ash
6. Work must commence within 12 months of approval or the plan may require further review and approval
7. Lights internal to the buildings shall be on motion and occupancy sensors
8. Walking pathways from all areas that are used by adjacent neighborhoods shall be shown on the plan and constructed
9. The lighting plan shall result in no greater than 0.0 foot candles at all property lines
10. A sidewalk shall be on the north side of the driveway that accesses the site from Hagewa Drive
11. Supplement the buffer along the south side of the parcel, adjacent to the parking areas, with understory shrubs, mixed evergreens, and deciduous plantings, particularly where vehicle headlights would impact adjacent residents

A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

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ITEM 4. – Continued Hearings

None

ITEM 5. – Old Business

None

ITEM 6. – New Business

None

ITEM 7. – Adjournment

DECISION: There being no further business, Julie Brook moved, Terry Peck seconded to adjourn the Board of Site Arrangement. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted aye. The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Paul Collett Jr., Chairman

MINUTES RECORDED BY:

Dan Johnson