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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: June 7, 2018  
RE: **Final Location, Character, and Extent review of a pad as part of a new outdoor classroom pavilion for Patrick Henry School of Science & Art, 3411 Semmes Ave.; UDC 2018-26**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Jason Kamras

**II. LOCATION**

3411 Semmes Avenue

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond Recreation & Parks

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for conceptual location, character, and extent review of a new outdoor classroom pavilion for Patrick Henry School of Science & Art (PHSSA).

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This application is for the final review of a pad as part of Phase I of a project that involves the installation of a new outdoor classroom pavilion adjacent to the main PHSSA building.

The overall project will be located within Forest Hill Park and would consist of an open design concept that includes a roof structure, weather-proof storage, picnic-type tables, power, lighting, fans, and potential security sensors. The space would accommodate 24 students with additional guest seating in an amphitheater-like design for larger gatherings and performances. The proposed project is meant to blend in with its surroundings using environmentally sensitive design.

Phase I will consist of a pad to be constructed of pavers or compacted crushed granite, which will allow for the more efficient construction of the Phase II foundation. The edge of the pad will be surrounded by a landscaped block wall, a mulch border with grass seed replacement to blend into the existing yard providing for a future rain garden swale, and a small rain garden enhancement at the end of the existing drainage swale.

Staff finds the location and character of the space appropriate and is supportive of the proposal.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following condition:

- That the applicant consult with DPU – Water Resources Division to ensure all design and plans are in compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act regulations.

**Staff Contact:**

Josh Son // (804) 646-3741 // joshua.son@richmondgov.com

**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The site is located within Forest Hill Park, adjacent to Patrick Henry School of Science and Art. Nestled among a group of trees, the proposed site lies in the southern most point of the park adjacent to Reedy Creek. The proposed site is located on a parcel zoned R-5 (residential, single family). It is predominantly surrounded by a forested area in close proximity to a commercial corridor where Semmes Avenue unites with Forest Hill Avenue.

**b. Scope of Review**

The proposed structure is subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as identification for a “public building”.

**c. Project Description**

To support the mission of the school and enhance learning in a nature environment, PHSSA received a grant to create an outdoor classroom space. Designed as a full sheltered pavilion, current grant funding combined with donated services, school PTA and community support will initiate the project's first phase to establish a defined site amenity space for focused gathering. By successful fundraising and additional donor contributions, complete construction of the full pavilion design is achievable within the following year. First phase budget development is targeted for \$20,000 and total project budget is estimated at \$65,000. The site work project is intended to occur over the school break period of June 18 - July 27 this early summer.

The school goals of a new pavilion classroom are:

- Enhance the science + art programs
- Be functionally flexible, provide physical accessibility
- Designed at an appropriate scale, visually fit the environment and be environmentally sensitive
- Be an amazing and inspiring space!

The program for PHSSA academic uses and functionality consist of:

- Accommodating 24 students / 4 picnic-type tables, plus extra capacity with added bench seating space and exterior seat opportunities
- Providing an Instructor demo table (mobile, with secure weather-proof storage)
- White-board (enclosable/protected) within secure/weather-proof storage cabinet - possible phase-2 item
- Potential use as a stage or stage-like function
- Additional seating on a seat wall terrace for larger gatherings and performances - planned for as phase-2 item
- Power, lighting, fans and potential security (lighting) sensors - planned for as phase-2 items

Materials for phase-1 portion of the project:

- Landscape retaining block wall as edge curbing and compacted fine-crushed stone (or pavers) as gathering space ground surface to accommodate phase-2 structure/foundation addition and the permanent slab or paver surface finish

- Mulch border at curbing with grass seed replacement of perimeter to blend into existing yard area, and accommodate phase-2 rain garden swale extension (for roof rain run-off management) around the gathering space pad
- Small rain garden enhancement at the end of the existing drainage swale (on edge of playground asphalt paving) with large stone/mulch surfaces, amended soils for improved percolation and low, hardy shrub plant materials

**d. UDC Review History**

At the regular February 2018 meeting of the UDC, this item (UDC 2018-8) came for conceptual review. The UDC recommended that this item be approved as conceptual with the following conditions for final review:

- That the applicant consult with DPU – Water Resources Division to ensure all design and plans are in compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act regulations.

At the subsequent regular February 2018 meeting of the Planning Commission item UDC 2018-8 was approved with the conditions recommended by the UDC.

**e. Master Plan**

This project falls within the Old South Planning District of the Master Plan. In addition to illustrating the property to remain as a public use, the area is part of the legally protected non-tidal wetlands “Adjacent to (Reedy Creek)...is a minimum 600 foot wide swath of riparian land designated as a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area” (page 271).

The plan further notes that “Development of any City facilities should be sensitive to the environmental resources and conditions on site and maximize their use for educational purposes” (page 281).

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Urban Design Guidelines impart that “Impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements. A preference should be given toward materials and construction techniques which improve energy efficiency and water/soil quality” (page 9).

The Guidelines also note that “Building materials should be aesthetically and structurally durable, of high quality, and require little maintenance. Where appropriate, substances which resist graffiti should be applied to building materials to reduce maintenance requirements” (page 17).

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**