



CITY OF RICHMOND

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE
AND EMERGENCY
SERVICES

December 7, 2022

To the members of the Urban Design Committee,

Subject: December 1, 2022 meeting with Southside Joint Civic Association Team

On December 1, 2022, members of Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services Executive Team met with the Joint Southside Civic Association to discuss our planned use of the Hickory Hill Community Center. Our presentation was met with skepticism by some in attendance by sharing their particular points of disagreement that ranged from the following:

- Historical significance
- Noise pollution
- Smoke
- The potential loss of the soccer field

Historical significance

In 1948 Hickory Hill became Chesterfield County's first African American High School and also served as an Elementary School. The Richmond Fire Department is very aware of the rich history of the school and we respect and value this history and significant legacy of the Community Center. Our Department seeks the opportunity to be not only good neighbors but community partners by continuing the practice of space sharing access to the community and offering much needed training in Fire Prevention, CPR, Stop the Bleed, Citizen Academies and other fire and life safety education opportunities and certifications.

Noise

Currently Richmond Fire utilizes the Hickory Hill facility periodically for training and special events without conflict from its current tenants or the surrounding community. The noise emanating from the facility by our presence will be negligible.

Burn building and smoke pollution

In recent history (10-15 years) when the burn building was functional we have only conducted burns for Recruit Academies so the frequency was determined based on the timeframe and type of class being held (Traditional vs. Lateral).

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Traditional Class – 4 Days total of burns

Lateral Class (4 week schedule) – 2 Days of burns

It would be extremely valuable for our current department members to have live fire training annually and that is where we would like to be in the future, provided the necessary resources are available. Below is, on average, what we are currently conducting and our future goal with running annual burns for all companies.

Current Burns at the Fire Training Academy (prior to burn building being condemned)

Annually: Twice a year on average for recruit training (6 Days in total: 2 for a Lateral Class & 4 for a traditional class).

Quarterly: NA

Monthly: NA

Weekly: NA

Future Goal

Annually: Twice a year on average for recruit training (6 Days in total: 2 for a Lateral Class & 4 for a traditional class)

Quarterly: NA

Monthly: NA

Weekly: NA

Summary of our proposal versus concerns

We believe there will be little impact to the availability and frequency of use at the Community Center by the neighboring communities. Every opportunity will be taken to inform nearby residents of the educational opportunities we will offer to observe, request, and participate in training offered by our staff. We believe our presence in Hickory Hill will add value and expand the mission and intent for education and a facility for community gatherings. The greater value to all the residents of Richmond is the reduction in emergency response time from our current facility located in Sandston, and reduces fuel and maintenance costs on our fire apparatus. The Hickory Hill location also addresses our ability to maintain the City's Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating of a Class-1. This is the highest achievable rating and directly impacts home and residential insurance rates.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our sincere desire to partner with the neighboring association and to be good public servants.

Best,

Melvin D. Carter
Chief of Fire