

November 14, 2025

Lynn Robeson Hannan, Acting Hearing Examiner

Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, Room 200
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Subject: Special Exception Major Modification Case No. CBA-1174-E
The Holton Arms School

Dear Ms. Robeson Hannan:

On November 13, 2025, the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission reviewed Special Exception Major Modification CBA No. CBA-1174-E, for the Holton Arms School. This is a request for: 1) an increase in the Applicant's enrollment cap from 670 to 870 students; 2) an increase in the Applicant's summer camp enrollment cap from 670 to 970; 3) use of the Applicant's facilities by third-party users; and 4) incorporating a previous Board of Appeals administrative approval regarding Granger House. The Planning Board received a presentation from Planning Staff, which included supplemental information and a correction to the staff report, and the Applicant was present to answer questions.

Staff presented to the Planning Board supplemental information per Section 59-G-1.2.1 of the Zoning Ordinance, Standard for evaluation, addressing the inherent and non-inherent adverse effects of the use on nearby properties and the general neighborhood at the proposed location, irrespective of adverse effects the use might have if established elsewhere in the zone. The Planning Board supported this supplemental information as stated below:

In this case, the Board of Appeals determined that all adverse effects of the Holton Arms School and associated uses are inherent, and include the size of the school/camp, traffic, trip generation, noise, lighting (see Board of Appeals Approval CBA 1174-C adopting Hearing Examiner's November 2006 Report and Recommendation and 2008 approval in CBA-1174-D). The proposed modification does not change the inherent adverse effects of the existing uses on the Property (school, summer camp, daycare, administrative uses). Accordingly, the school size, traffic, trip generation and access for the uses on the Property remain inherent adverse effects which have been mitigated by the proposed improvements to the River Road and Royal Dominion Drive intersection and accompanying Transportation Management Plan.

In the previous approvals by the Board of Appeals, no non-inherent adverse effects were identified for this Special Exception. Similarly, Staff has not identified any non-inherent adverse effects relating to the proposed modification.

Staff presented to the Planning Board supplemental information per Section 59-G-1.21 of the Zoning Ordinance, General Conditions, (a)(3) addressing the Special Exception Major Modification's consistency with the General Plan for the physical development of the District, including any master plan adopted by the Commission. The Planning Board supported the updated language in underline as follows:

The Subject Property is located within the 1990 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan. The Plan affirms the existing R-90 and R-200 Zones for the Property and recognizes that private school use may continue on the Property. The Major Modification is consistent with the goals of the 2022 Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan as the School will allow opportunity for additional enrollment in an existing facility along the developed area of River Road east of Interstate 495, which is identified as a growth corridor in the General Plan thereby supporting compact growth.

Staff also presented a correction to the Planning Board, a revision to recommended Condition #7.d.i, in regard to the recommended amendments to the Transportation Management Plan, as shown in underline and strikeout below. This revision was proposed to allow the Applicant flexibility in issuance of parking permits based on the number of necessary permits for faculty while maintaining the restrictions that were analyzed within the Transportation Impact Study:

- i) Establish a maximum number of student driver ~~parking permits of 85~~ and faculty parking permits of 304.

Within the presentation, Staff shared with the Planning Board that additional information was requested by the Hearing Examiner the Wednesday afternoon prior to the Planning Board hearing. Staff explained that the supplemental information as presented would address some of the requests, and more time was necessary to fully address the remaining requests. Staff stated that a Supplemental Memo would be prepared and sent to the Hearing Examiner within the following week and made the Planning Board aware that some of the wording within the conditions in the Staff Report may be updated to bring forward existing conditions to which the Special Exception is subject.

The Planning Board received written testimony ahead of the hearing from the residents in a neighborhood south of River Road, in opposition to the Special Exception. One resident was present at the Hearing and similarly spoke in opposition to the Project for reasons shared in the written testimony. The residents oppose the increased enrollment and are concerned about increased traffic on River Road and impacts from potential neighborhood cut through traffic. There were also several requests to mandate busing for all students.

In the Applicant's presentation, the Applicant requested additional flexibility for Conditions 5 and 6, regarding the timing of the intersection improvements and installation of the bus shelter prior to any increase in enrollment. The Applicant is requesting additional time to present information to Staff and reviewing agencies to determine if the summer camp enrollment can increase prior to these improvements, as road volumes on River Road are less than during the school year. Staff and the Planning Board were amenable to allowing flexibility in these conditions for the timing to determine if this can happen. The following edits were incorporated into Conditions 5 and 6 as shown in strikeout

and underline below, and a new condition (Condition No. 8) addresses the necessary improvements before the summer camp enrollment can be increased:

5. Before any the student enrollment cap for the academic year is increased, the Applicant must fully construct and complete the following improvements, including associated signal timing adjustments, identified by SHA and MCDOT, and provide verification of the bond release relating to the improvements:
 - a) The extension of the westbound right turn lane on River Road as described in the LATR study.
 - b) The addition of the northbound left turn lane at Royal Dominion Drive and River Road, as described in the LATR study.
6. Before any the student enrollment cap for the academic year is increased, the Applicant must install a bus shelter at the existing bus stop along the Property frontage on River Road.

New Condition

8. The Applicant must submit further documentation and analysis to Planning Staff, SHA, MCDOT, and the Hearing Examiner to determine if all of the improvements listed in Conditions 5 and 6 need to be provided in full before enrollment for the summer camp is increased.

There were lengthy discussions between the Planning Board and the Applicant team regarding the proposed intersection improvements and associated signal timing adjustments. The Planning Board was interested in the cut through traffic through the Al Marah neighborhood, and the Applicant explained that additional study was conducted by the Applicant team to observe the cut through traffic from the neighborhood, and that in many cases there were drop offs occurring at the Primary Day School presumably before continuing on to the Holton Arms School.

As an amendment to a previously approved special exception, the Subject Application is governed by the Zoning Ordinance in effect on October 29, 2014. As conditioned, the proposed use meets the findings set forth in Section 59-G-2.19 of the Zoning Ordinance, is consistent with the goals and recommendations of the 1990 *Bethesda – Chevy Chase Master Plan*; and the Applicant has met the burden of proof by showing that the proposed amendments will be operated without detriment to the neighborhood and will not adversely affect the public interest.

On a motion by Commissioner Hedrick, seconded by Commissioner Pedoeem, with Chair Harris, Vice Chair Linden, and Commissioner Bartley voting in favor, the Board recommends (5-0) that Special Exception Major Modification No. CBA-1174-E, The Holton Arms School, be approved with the conditions enumerated in the Staff Report and modified at the Hearing with additional information presented at the Hearing.

Ms. Lynn Robeson Hannan

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We hope the Planning Board's recommendations, the Staff Report and accompanying exhibits will be helpful to your proceedings. If you have any questions or comments concerning our review, please contact Grace Bogdan by phone at (301) 495-4533 or via email at grace.bogdan@montgomeryplanning.org.

Sincerely,



Artie L. Harris

Chair

CC: Soo Lee-Cho, Bregman, Berbert, Schwartz & Gilday, LLC

Enclosure