

DATE: September 3, 2010

TO: Barbara Ross, Deputy Director
Department of Planning and Zoning

FROM: Mary Christesen, Planner
Department of Planning and Zoning

SUBJECT: Special Use Permit #2010-0049
Administrative Review for a Special Use Permit
Site Use: Child Day Care
Applicant: Saint Rita School by Mary Schlickenmaier, Principal
Location: 3828 Russell Road (Parcel Address: 3801 Russell Road)
Zone: RA/Multi-Family

Request

The applicant, Saint Rita School, by Mary P. Schlickenmaier, Principal, is requesting approval of an administrative special use permit to operate a preschool in a church building located at 3825 Russell Road.

Background

Saint Rita School has operated at this location since the early 1950's in accordance with Special Use Permit #2, approved by City Council on August 14, 1951. The existing school provides instruction for 190 children in Kindergarten through 8th grade. The school currently operates from 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., with before and after school care available starting at 7:00 a.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m.

The applicant is proposing to operate a preschool for children ages 3 to 4 years old in two classrooms within the Parish Center building. The preschool will operate from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. During that time the applicant will offer two sessions, morning and afternoon, with a maximum of 15 students in each of the classrooms.

Even though there is already a school on this site, there is adequate room to accommodate two additional classrooms in an auxiliary church building, separate from the existing school. There is a large demand in the City for preschool aged child care. Saint Rita School has educated children in Kindergarten through 8th grade for many years and now wishes to serve the community by providing that opportunity for preschool aged children.

The formation of Saint Rita's Preschool to accommodate children ages three and four would be a welcomed addition to the community. The church intends to make its preschool open to all children regardless of race or religion, thereby meeting the needs of all local families. The space available is clean, attractive, well lit and large making it an ideal space for children to learn and play. The principal appears to have the best interest of children and their families as a priority. The community will benefit from having a new preschool at this site.

Parking/Drop-Off

Section 8-200(A)(11) of the Zoning Ordinance requires one parking space for every 25 classroom seats in elementary schools and two spaces for each preschool classroom. The existing school with 190 students requires 8 parking spaces and the two proposed preschool classrooms will require 4 parking spaces. A total of 12 parking spaces are required for the two uses. The site currently provides 67 parking spaces.

The existing school has a drop-off plan already in place. Parents enter the site from Russell Road, just north of the church, and exit onto Russell Road just south of the church. There is adequate parking near the Parish Center where parents can park and escort their children to class without impeding the flow of traffic in and out of the site. The applicant has staggered the beginning and ending hours for the preschool from the hours of the elementary school to lessen any potential traffic impact.

Community Outreach

Public notice was provided through eNews, via the City’s website, and by posting a placard on the site. In addition, the Arlandria Civic Association was sent an e-mail with information about the current application. Staff has not received any comments from residents or adjacent businesses that would require staff to docket the special use permit for public hearing.

Staff Action

This request to operate a preschool is consistent with the Small Business Zoning regulations approved by City Council on December 13, 2008. Staff has approved the application administratively, subject to the conditions attached to this report.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION - DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING:

Date: September 3, 2010
Action: Approved

Barbara Ross, Deputy Director

- Attachments: 1) Special Use Permit Conditions
2) City Department Comments
3) Statement of Consent

CONDITIONS OF SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2010-00049

The owner is responsible for ensuring that the following conditions are adhered to at all times. Violation of any of the conditions may result in fines and/or referral to public hearing by the Planning Commission and City Council.

1. The special use permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any business or entity in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z)
2. The hours of operation for the preschool shall be limited to between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. (P&Z)
3. The maximum number of children permitted at the preschool at any one time shall be 30 and no more than 60 in one day, subject to approval of the Licensing Division of the Virginia Department of Social Services. (P&Z)
4. The facility shall obtain all required state, federal, and local licenses and certificates prior to opening its place of business. (P&Z)
5. The applicant shall conduct employee training sessions on an ongoing basis, including as part of any employee orientation, to discuss all special use permit provisions and requirements. (P&Z)
6. The applicant shall require its employees who drive to work to use off-street parking. (P&Z)
7. The facility shall provide adequate drop off and pick up facilities so as to create minimal impact on pedestrian and vehicular traffic. (P&Z)
8. The administrative permit approved by the director pursuant to Section 11-513 of the zoning ordinance shall be displayed in a conspicuous and publicly accessible place. A certificate provided by the city shall inform the public of its right to examine the list of standards associated with the permit. A copy of the list of standards with the permit shall be kept on the premises and made available for examination by the public upon request. (P&Z)
9. The applicant shall ensure that no vehicles stop on Russell Road or Glebe Road for pick-up or drop-off. All pick-up and drop-off's shall occur on site and outside of the public right of ways. (T&ES)
10. All loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building. (T&ES)
11. Access to adjacent properties or driveway entrances shall not be blocked at any time. (T&ES)

12. The applicant is to contact the Community Relations Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a security assessment for the child care center. This is to be completed prior to the child care center opening for business. (Police)

13. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit one year after approval and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if (a) there have been documented violations of the permit conditions which were not corrected immediately, constitute repeat violations or which create a direct and immediate adverse zoning impact on the surrounding community; (b) the director has received a request from any person to docket the permit for review as a result of a complaint that rises to the level of a violation; or (c) the director has determined that there are problems with the operation of the use and that new or revised conditions are needed. (P&Z)

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- R-1 The applicant shall ensure that no vehicles stop on Russell Road or Glebe Road for pick-up or drop-off. All pick-up and drop-off's shall occur on site and outside of the public right of ways.
- R-2 All loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building.
- R-3 Access to adjacent properties or driveway entrances shall not be blocked at any time.
- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line. (T&ES)

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 A fire prevention code permit is required for the proposed operation.
- C-2 When a change of use requires a greater degree of structural strength, fire protection, exit facilities or sanitary provisions, a construction permit is required (USBC 108.1).
- C-3 Building Code Analysis: The following minimum building code data is required on the drawings: a) use group, b) number of stories, c) construction type and d) tenant area.
- C-4 Additional information is required in order to determine any additional code requirements. The applicant is highly encouraged to contact Code Administration with the above information and a detailed floor plan and site plan.

Health Department:

No comments.

Parks and Recreation:

No comments.

Police Department:

- R-1 The applicant is to contact the Community Relations Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a security assessment for the child care center. This is to be completed prior to the child care center opening for business.

Human Services

Observations and Suggestions

1. Presently Saint Rita's School, located at 3801 Russell Road, serves children in grades K-8. The school would like to expand to include three and four year olds in an adjacent building.
2. The proposed site includes several available large rooms, two of which would be chosen as classrooms. The larger of the rooms would be good choices for the children. Other rooms could be used for activities including art, large motor activities and conferences.
3. There are two bathrooms conveniently located to all the possible rooms which are presently fitted for adult use. These bathrooms would need to be outfitted with lower sinks and commodes for children's use.
4. The classrooms are large and well lit with built in storage closets. There is ample space for the children to work and play. Equipment would be ordered and put in place.
5. Sinks are presently not available in the rooms for hand washing and activity clean up. When the two rooms are chosen, a sink could be installed in each one.
6. There is a large well lit entryway which could also be utilized.
7. A large parking lot exists and is presently used by the church and school. The proposed preschool would have ample space for drop off and pick up assuming the hours for the school and preschool are staggered. It is the suggestion of the Office of Early childhood Education that children be brought into the classrooms rather than dropped off at the school entryway.
8. A playground presently exists for school aged children. It is suggested that a separate playground area be fenced off and used for the preschool. It would be located adjacent to the preschool and commensurate with the children's needs and abilities. Several areas are available.

Conclusions

The formation of Saint Rita's Preschool to accommodate children ages three and four would be a welcomed addition to the community. The church intends to make its preschool open to all children regardless of race or religion, thereby meeting the needs of all local families. The space available is clean, attractive, well lit and large making it an ideal space for children to learn and play. The principal appears to have the best interest of children and their families as a priority. The community will benefit from having a new preschool at this site.