

Docket Item #3  
SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2004-0024

Planning Commission Meeting  
May 4, 2004

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for a special use permit to operate a private college preparatory school.

**APPLICANT:** The Transitional School  
by Katherine Keith

**LOCATION:** 25 South Quaker Lane

**ZONE:** CSL/Commercial Service Low

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the permit conditions found in Section III of this report.

## I. DISCUSSION

### REQUEST

The applicant, The Transitional School, represented by Katherine Keith, requests special use permit approval for the operation of a private school located at 24 South Quaker Lane.

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject property is one lot of record having 467 feet of frontage on South Quaker Lane and a total lot area of 2.1 acres. The property contains the old Stonewall Jackson School, which has been converted into an office building predominantly occupied by a variety of private schools, a child care center and the Rocklands restaurant. The applicant will occupy 1,675 square feet on the first floor in the building's west wing, which is also accessible through a rear entrance.

To the north of the site is a Wendy's restaurant and office buildings are located to the east. To the south and west of the property is the City of Alexandria Maintenance Facility. East of that facility, across South Quaker Lane, is the City's DASH bus storage and maintenance yard.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to operate a small non-profit high school, grades 9 to 12, with a college preparatory curriculum. The school is funded through tuition and some fund-raising, and is geared towards bright students who have not thrived in a traditional educational environment. The applicant's educational philosophy is based on Howard Gardener's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, which includes hands-on and multi-sensory learning, weekly field trips and internships. Students may leave their public/private school to enroll for up to two years in the Transitional School, and have the option to earn their high school diploma in the Transitional School or to transfer back to the public/private school system. In order to facilitate the transition back to the area's public and private schools or onto college, credit is earned through Brigham Young University online courses, which are accepted by schools throughout the area and recognized by colleges.

Hours of operation: The proposed school will be in session during the normal school calendar year with operating hours of between 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

Students/Employees: The applicant anticipates between 16 and 24 students, ages 14 to 18, to attend classes at any one time, however, the applicant proposes a maximum of 32 students to allow for a potential expansion in the future. At no time will there be no more than eight students in one of the four classrooms. The school will start operating with two full-time and two part-time teachers.

Trash/Noise: Trash will primarily consist of office papers and will be collected weekly. The applicant indicated that students will have open lunch three days per week, with permission based on their school performance. In order to prevent littering and nuisance to adjacent users, the applicant established a program that includes a student manual detailing expected behavior within the building and community, suspension of open lunch privileges for students who create nuisances, installment of trash receptacle at the rear entrance, and monitoring of the premises for litter by the school's management.

#### PARKING

According to Section 8-200 (A) (11) of the Zoning Ordinance, a high school is required to provide one parking space for each ten classroom seats. The applicant proposes a maximum of 32 students present at any one time, resulting in a total of four required parking spaces. The applicant will have eight spaces designated for the business by sign or paint. The applicant indicates that students enrolled in grades 9 through 11 will not be allowed to drive to school. Seniors who achieve a certain grade point average will be allowed to drive but the applicant does not anticipate many seniors.

Pick-up and drop-off will take place on the back parking lot, along a 50-foot grassy area. Up to four cars can service this drop-off strip without blocking any parking spaces. Beyond that, the parking spaces that would be temporarily blocked are the ones that are designated to the applicant's school. With this parking and drop-off/pick-up plan students may enter through the rear entrance and therefore eliminate any congestion at the building's main entrance and parking lot.

#### ZONING / MASTER PLAN

The subject property is located in the CSL/Commercial Service Low zone. Section 4-303 (V) of the Zoning Ordinance allows a private school in the CSL zone only with a special use permit. The proposed use is consistent with the Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill small area plan chapter of the Master Plan, which designates the property for uses consistent with the CSL zone.

## **II. STAFF ANALYSIS**

Staff supports the proposed private school located at 25 South Quaker Lane and finds that the easy access due to the site's close proximity to Duke Street, the building's initial purpose as a school and the surrounding non-residential uses make this small non-profit school an appropriate and much needed use for this area.

Staff has included various standard conditions and recommends a review of the school after it has been operational for one year so if there are any problems with the operation, additional conditions may be imposed. With these conditions, staff recommends approval of the special use permit.

### III. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Staff recommends approval subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. The special use permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any corporation in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z)
2. The number of students attending classes at any one time shall not exceed 32. (P&Z)
3. The hours of operation shall be limited to between 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, as requested by the applicant. (P&Z)
4. The applicant shall post the hours of operation at the entrance to the business. (P&Z)
5. A minimum of four parking spaces shall be designated for the school's use by signs or paint. (P&Z)
6. Trash and garbage shall be stored inside or in a dumpster. Litter on the site and on public rights-of-way and spaces adjacent to or within 75 feet of the premises shall be picked up as often as necessary, to prevent an unsightly and unsanitary accumulation. (P&Z)
7. The applicant shall require its employees who drive to work to use off-street parking. (P&Z)
8. The applicant shall encourage its employees to use mass transit or to carpool when traveling to and from work, by posting information regarding DASH and METRO routes, the location where fare passes for transit are sold, and advertising of carpooling opportunities. (P&Z)
9. The applicant shall contact the Crime Prevention Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a security survey for the business prior to the school opening. (Police)
10. The applicant shall conduct employee training sessions on an ongoing basis, including as part of any employee orientation, to discuss all SUP provisions and requirements. (P&Z)

11. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit after the school has been operational for one year, 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 received a request from any person to docket the permit for review as the result of a complaint that rises to the level of a violation of the permit conditions, (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)

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;  
Barbara Ross, Deputy Director;  
Bettina Irps, Urban Planner.

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Staff Note: In accordance with section 11-506(c) of the zoning ordinance, construction or operation shall be commenced and diligently and substantially pursued within 18 months of the date of granting of a special use permit by City Council or the special use permit shall become void.

#### IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

##### Transportation & Environmental Services:

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.

##### Code Enforcement:

F-1 The proposed use is consistent with the proposed use. No change of use is required.

C-1 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

C-2 A fire prevention code permit is required for the proposed operation. An egress plan showing fixture location, aisles and exit doors shall be submitted for review with the permit application.

C-3 Alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit. Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application. The plans must include all dimensions, construction alterations details, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical layouts and schematics.

C-4 This structure contains mixed use groups and is subject to the mixed use and occupancy requirements of USBC.

C-5 Required exits, parking, and accessibility for persons with disabilities must be provided to the building.

##### Health Department:

F-1 No Comments.

##### Police Department:

R-1 The applicant is to contact the Crime Prevention Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a security survey prior to the school opening.