



DOCKET ITEM #10
Text Amendment #2016-0005
Classroom Trailers

Issue: A) Initiation of a Text Amendment and B) public hearing and consideration of a text amendment to allow classroom trailers by administrative special use permit.	Planning Commission Hearing:	June 9, 2016
	City Council Hearing:	June 18, 2016
Staff: Sam Shelby, Urban Planner, sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov Alex Dambach, Division Chief, alex.dambach@alexandriava.gov		

I. Issue

Currently, section 7-1101(C) of the Zoning Ordinance allows for temporary, nonresidential trailers to be parked on a lot pursuant to full-hearing special use permit (SUP) approval. Staff proposes a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to allow Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) to park classroom trailers on public school property pursuant to administrative special use permit approval.

II. Background

City regulations have allowed for non-recreational trailers through the full-hearing SUP process since 1963. Prior to that, non-recreational trailers were prohibited citywide.

Since 1986, ACPS has requested approval for 33 SUPs for classroom trailers to expand capacity at 13 City public schools to address increasing enrollment and subsequent overcrowding problems. The Planning Commission recommended and City Council granted approval of all 33 SUPs. Of these SUPs, the Planning Commission recommended approval of 18 on the consent agenda, 14 unanimously, and one on a vote of 3-2-2. Speakers at the Planning Commission hearings generally spoke in support of the requests, however, some expressed concerns about parking, traffic, and visual compatibility with surrounding areas.

At the request of Planning Commission, ACPS prepared a Trailer Plan in March 2000. This plan identified an increased need for classroom trailers at several City public schools due to increased enrollment at that time. Since 2007, ACPS has faced significant additional increases in enrollment; averaging nearly four percent per year from 2007 through 2014 according to findings from the 2015 Long Range Educational Facilities Plan (LREFP). This is an overall increase in K-12 enrollment of 35 percent since 2006; from 10,246 students in 2006 to 13,847 in 2014. The LREFP recommends that schools at or above 120% utilization within three years should be considered for classroom trailers.

III. Discussion of Proposed Text Changes

The proposed text changes to section 7-1100(C) to allow for administrative SUP approval for public classroom trailers to be parked in any zone where public schools are allowed as a permitted use and in conjunction with an ACPS school. Text changes to section 11-513 would establish specific standards and procedures for administrative SUP review of classroom trailers. The proposed text changes would only apply to public schools because their development is the result of public processes, including public planning processes such as the Long Range Education Facilities Plan as well as public participation in the development, review and approval of the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Private schools do not necessarily have the same level of public planning, so the full-hearing SUP review process remains appropriate for such facilities.

It should be noted that a short but coordinated review process is necessary due to the inherently temporary nature of school trailers, which may be used as swing space while

school construction projects are underway. These trailers are usually needed before the September start of the school year. With City Council's summer recess, trailer installation applications need to be submitted to Planning Staff in March (at the latest) of the preceding school year in order for the trailers to be ready for the following school year. This six month time period is often impractical for many school situations, especially construction projects, in part because the CIP may not be finalized by then.

Typical potential impacts of classroom trailers are parking, noise, visual impact, and impacts on open space. Many of these issues are regulated by the zoning ordinance and other City codes. For example, there would need to be parking spaces provided for the additional classroom space, using the standard parking ratios for schools. Trailers are not permitted in the POS zone, so trailers would not be able to be located in parkland adjacent to schools. Trailers would need to meet Floor Area Ratio, setback and height requirements of the zone (trailers count toward FAR). Staff is recommending a number of specific standards to mitigate potential impacts of classroom trailers not covered by the ordinance.

IV. Recommendation

Based on the LREFP's school enrollment projections, ACPS will likely need additional school capacity in the next three years. Staff believes that there is low potential for negative land use impacts if public school classroom trailers were permitted by administrative SUP based on case histories of classroom trailer SUP applications. Further, all administrative SUPs have enforceable conditions of approval and similar public noticing requirements to full-hearing SUPs. For these reasons, classroom trailers are a viable short-term solution to increasing capacity demands on the City's public school system.

Staff **recommends approval** of Text Amendment #2016-0005 to allow for public school classroom trailers by administrative special use permit.

Staff: Sam Shelby, Urban Planner
Alex Dambach, Division Chief

Attachment: Proposed Zoning Text Changes

Proposed Zoning Ordinance Changes

Sec. 7-1100 - Parking trailers and recreational vehicles.

7-1101 - Restrictions on parking trailers in any zone.

The parking of a trailer in any zone is hereby prohibited with the following exceptions:

- (A) One trailer may be parked or stored in a lawful, enclosed garage, provided that no living quarters or business premises shall be maintained in such trailer.
- (B) Trailers used as contractors' offices or equipment sheds may be parked on the site of an active construction project for the duration of construction authorized by an approved building permit.
- (C) Trailers used for temporary nonresidential purposes such as classrooms, banks, offices, or similar activities may be parked on a lot provided approval of a special use permit has first been obtained, **except that a special use permit for trailers used for school related activities in in any zone where public schools are a permitted use and in conjunction with an ACPS school may be approved administratively subject to section 11-513 of this ordinance.**

11-513 - Administrative special use permit.

An applicant may seek the director's approval of a use identified in this ordinance as one for which administrative special use permit approval is available pursuant to the standards and procedures outlined in this section.

(A) Jurisdiction and procedures for administrative approval.

- (1) An applicant for an administrative SUP under this section shall file an application with the director on such forms and subject to such procedures as the director may establish for the purpose. The application shall include a statement identifying the applicant as required by section 11-503 of this ordinance.
- (2) Notice of a pending administrative permit application shall be made in a newspaper of general circulation in the city, posted on the subject property, given to nearby civic and business associations by email, by eNews or equivalent electronic notice, and prominently posted on the department web page in a list of pending administrative applications for review by the public. Such notice shall be given at least 21 days prior to the approval of an amendment under this section. The public may submit comments to the director regarding the application.
- (3) The application shall be reviewed for compliance with this section 11-513 as well as with applicable provisions of section 11-500.
- (4) As an alternative to an administrative approval, an applicant may choose to seek special use permit approval pursuant to section 11-500 of the zoning ordinance.
- (5) After review the director may approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application. An approval by the director shall be deemed

to have the force and effect of a special use permit, under section 11-500, except that provisions of 11-507 shall not apply.

- (6) The director may determine that administrative approval is not appropriate and that special use permit approval shall be required if the proposal will not be compatible with the adjacent and surrounding properties, if the applicant fails to meet the standards for the permit, if the applicant fails to consent to the conditions of the administrative permit or if after consultation with the police department it is determined that there are criminal or nuisance activities or zoning ordinance violations at the proposed location or with the proposed operator.
- (7) In the event any person, whether owner, lessee, principal, agent, employee or otherwise, materially fails to comply with any standard of this section, the director may suspend or revoke the administrative approval in whole or in part and on such terms and conditions as deemed necessary to effect the cure of such failure. The applicant or his successor in interest may appeal this suspension or revocation pursuant to section 11-205(B) et seq. of this ordinance, except that such appeal shall be heard by the planning commission.

(B) *Appeals.*

- (1) Any person affected by a decision of the director issued pursuant to section 11-513(A)(5) may appeal the decision to the planning commission, by filing a notice of appeal, in writing, stating the grounds on which the person is affected and the grounds of appeal, with the director within 30 days of the issuance of the decision.
- (2) The planning commission shall conduct a public hearing on any appeal filed pursuant to section 11-513(B)(1), notice for which shall be provided in accordance with the applicable provisions of section 11-300 of this ordinance. Following the conclusion of the hearing, the planning commission may affirm, reverse or modify the decision of the director, or vacate the decision and remand the matter to the director for further consideration.
- (3) Any person affected by a decision of the planning commission issued pursuant to section 11-513(B)(2) may appeal the decision to the city council, by filing a notice of appeal, in writing, stating the grounds on which the person is affected and the grounds of appeal, with the city clerk within five days of the issuance of the decision.
- (4) The city council shall conduct a public hearing on any appeal filed pursuant to section 11-513(B)(3), notice for which shall be provided in accordance with the applicable provisions of section 11-300 of this ordinance. Following the conclusion of the hearing, the council may affirm, reverse or modify the decision of the commission, or vacate the decision and remand the matter to the planning commission or the director for further consideration.

(C) *General standards for all administrative uses:*

- (1) The administrative permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any business or entity in which the applicant has a controlling interest. Any change in the ownership of the use that is the subject of the administrative permit may be transferred administratively with the approval of the director pursuant to the requirements of section 11-511 of this ordinance.
- (2) The applicant shall provide information about alternative forms of transportation to access the location of the use, including but not limited to printed and electronic business promotional material, posting on the business website, and other similar methods.
- (3) The applicant shall encourage its employees and customers 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.
- (4) At such time as an organized parking program is adopted by city council to assist with employee or customer parking for the area in which the subject property is located, such as a shared parking program or the Park Alexandria program, the applicant shall participate in the program.
- (5) The applicant shall require its employees who drive to work to use off-street parking.
- (6) The applicant shall install signs inside the building indicating the location of off-street parking in the area and shall inform customers about the parking.
- (7) Trash and garbage shall be stored inside or in sealed containers that do not allow odors to escape or invasion by animals. No trash and debris shall be allowed to accumulate outside of those containers. Outdoor trash receptacles shall be screened to the satisfaction of the director.
- (8) The applicant shall contact the crime prevention unit of the Alexandria Police Department for a security survey and robbery awareness program for employees prior to the operation of the business.
- (9) Litter on the site and on public rights-of-way and spaces adjacent to or within 75 feet of the premises shall be monitored and picked up at least twice during the day and at the close of the business, and more often if necessary, to prevent an unsightly or unsanitary accumulation, on each day that the business is in operation.
- (10) The use must comply with the city's noise ordinance. No outdoor speakers shall be permitted. No amplified sound shall be audible at the property line.
- (11) The administrative permit approved by the director pursuant to this section 11-513 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 associated with the permit shall be kept on the premises and made available for examination by the public upon request.

- (12) Improvements may be required to the facade or the front of the business establishment, including landscaping and site improvements, consistent with design guidelines and principles enumerated in the adopted small area plan for the neighborhood, and as determined by the director to be necessary and appropriate to achieve the design and streetscape objectives of that plan.
- (13) 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, and methods to prevent underage sales of alcohol.
- (14) The director may require conditions additional to those listed in the standards of this section if the director finds it to be reasonable to support the use and its compatibility with surrounding uses and the neighborhood.
- (15) The request will not significantly and negatively impact nearby residential neighborhoods.

(X) Specific standards for trailers at public schools

- (1) **The administrative special use permit approval shall expire five years from the date of approval, but such approval may be renewed administratively;**
- (2) **All classroom trailers shall be located so as to reduce visibility from public rights-of-way and from nearby residentially zoned properties, and the design for trailers shall be compatible with applicable historic district and/or Master Plan design guidelines to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Zoning;**
- (3) **Loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building, and no amplified sounds shall be audible at the property line;**
- (4) **Parking and circulation must be to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation and Environmental Services;**
- (5) **Impacts to parking that meets recreational needs during non-school hours should be minimized; and**
- (6) **Trailers shall not be used for storage purposes.**