



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Karen Thomas, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: April 8, 2014

SUBJECT: BZA Application 18740- Application of Sheridan School, Inc., for a special exception under § 206 to allow the continued operation of the existing private school and a minor increase in student enrollment from 226 to 230 students at 4400 36th Street, N.W. (Square 1968, Lot 10).

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends **approval** of the special exception under § 206 to permit the continued operation of the school, with a minor increase in student enrollment from 226 to 230 students, under the conditions submitted by the applicant. OP supports the revised conditions submitted by the applicant, including the removal of the term limit of approval, since changes to the school's operations, faculty and staff, and student enrollment would require the applicant to obtain the Board's approval.

II. AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	4400 36 th Street NW
Legal Description	Square 1968, Lot 10
Ward/ANC	3/ANC 3F
Lot Characteristics	The lot is 70,980.66 square feet in area and 235 feet wide, sloping gently along Alton Place with a substantial grade change to the Yuma Street frontage.
Zoning	The property is zoned R-2, which is a residence district, comprised primarily of one-family, semi-detached dwellings.
Adjacent Properties	The property has frontage on three streets: Alton Place, 36th Street and Yuma Street. On the fourth side (west) is a public alley along the southern half of the property, and an adjacent semi-detached dwelling on the northern half, fronting on Alton Street.

<p>Existing Development</p>	<p>The site is developed with a two-story, ‘L’ shaped school building constructed on the northern and western portions of the site. In the northwest corner of the property is a 22-space parking lot, with two points of egress from Alton Place. On the east side of the building are six off-street parking spaces, in two groups of three on either side of the main entrance to the building. An outdoor play area is located south and east of the building, at the northwest corner of 36th and Yuma Street.</p> <p>The southern portion of the site, along the Yuma Street frontage, is the most heavily landscaped portion of the property, including many trees. The topography of the site slopes downward from the south to the north, resulting in the southern portion of the site, south of the building and the outdoor play area, being hilly. The remainder of the site, including the parking areas, is relatively level. Residences across Alton Place and Yuma Street from the subject property are at higher elevations than the school building and parking lots. The main entrance to the building is from 36th Street. Vehicular access to the property is from Alton Street and 36th Street.</p>
<p>Surrounding Neighborhood Character</p>	<p>The surrounding area is predominantly residential, primarily developed with one-family detached and semi-detached dwellings. To the north, across Alton Place, and to the east, across 36th Street, are one-family detached dwellings within the R-1-B District. To the south, and west across Yuma Street, are one-family detached dwellings within the R-2 District.</p>

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION-IN-BRIEF

<p>Applicant</p>	<p>Sheridan School, Inc.</p>
<p>Proposal</p>	<p>The current request is for a continuation of the private school with a minor increase of 4 additional students to the current enrollment. In addition, the applicant is requesting a permanent special exception, without an expiration date, except for future changes which would require the Board’s approval. The school is also proposing to renovate the existing playground, including a new turf field within the existing grade and footprint.</p>
<p>Relief Sought</p>	<p>Special Exception pursuant to 11 DCMR §§ 206 and 3104.1 to continue the operation of the private school and permit a minor increase in the student enrollment from 226 to 230 students.</p>

History

BZA Order

<p>App. #7282 (1963)</p>	<p>Granted the establishment of “a private school for pre-school, kindergarten and grades 1 through 8 with 200 students.</p>
<p>BZA 13089 (1980)</p>	<p>Permitted the addition of two staff offices on the first floor and science laboratory on the second floor.</p>
<p>BZA 15656 (1992)</p>	<p>Permitted an increase in the number of students from 200 to 215, a building addition containing classrooms, a library, a gymnasium and support facilities.</p>
<p>BZA 16977 (2004)</p>	<p>Permitted enrollment increase to 226 and 60 staff, for a period of 10 years. 1,200 gsf addition to the school: parking areas reconfigured: variance from parking requirement.</p>

IV. RELIEF REQUESTED

The subject property is currently permitted as a private school for kindergarten through eighth grade. The application indicates that the school would like to increase flexibility in its admissions process to the school. No faculty increase is proposed or any additions or renovations to the existing school building. The school is also requesting that an expiration date for the order is not included with the special exception.

i. Special Exception pursuant to § 206– Private Schools and Staff Residences

Section 206 sets forth the specific criteria under which Private Schools may be permitted within a residential district as follows:

206 Use as a private school, but not including a trade school, and residences for teachers and staff of a private school, shall be permitted in an R-1 District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment in accordance with the conditions specified in §3108 of chapter 31 of this title, subject to the provisions of this section.

This application is for the continuation of the existing private school, with an increase in the enrollment from 226 to 230 students. All other aspects of the school's operation, including its summer educational program, CASA, which does not operate concurrently with the school, will remain the same.

207 The private school shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions.

The private school, which has been operating at this location for almost fifty years, is not anticipated in the future to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic or number of students. OP is not opposed to removal of the time cap due to its time in operation, but understands that the ANC would like the Board to decide on a time cap between 5-10 years.

Number of Students and Staff

This application also requests a minor increase in the maximum number students permitted at this existing private school by 4. The increase in the number of students is expected to be spread throughout the school and will not result in an increase in the number of teachers and other employees, and none of the students are old enough to drive. Currently, the school operates with 55 full time faculty and staff. Its approved cap is 60 and there is no requested increase for staff at this time.

Noise

The hours of operation are between 7:30 am and 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The hours coincide with standard school and work hours and do not result in a noise impact to the adjacent neighbors. The minimal increase in students would not generate additional noise.

Traffic

The school's transportation assessment was referred to the District Department of Transportation for their review and recommendation. At ANC 3F's meeting on March 18, 2014 neighbors expressed concerns regarding traffic in the neighborhood due to drop off and pick up. The school

has indicated that they are aware of concerns and is currently working with a police officer to ticket parents at drop-off and pick-up times who do not abide by the school's policies. The applicant maintains a transportation management plan, as highlighted with their transportation assessment included in the submission (Wells and Associates, page 11).

Parking

The existing parking areas (with approved variances under the 2004 Order) accommodate the required on-site parking, reducing the demand by the school for on-street parking, and its potential impact on adjoining and nearby properties.

208 Ample parking space, but not less than that required in chapter 21 of this title, shall be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile.

No increase in parking is necessary as per § 2101.1 of the Zoning Regulations since the faculty cap would remain at 60 members.

ii. Is the proposal in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps?

The school use is a special exception which is presumed compatible subject to a finding of no adverse impact. It is a long standing school operation for the past 50 years and operates in harmony with the general intent and purposes of the Regulations under conditions outlined in its existing order.

iii. Would the proposal appear to tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property?

The proposal to remove the 10-year time cap and the proposed increase in enrollment by 4 students would not adversely affect the use of neighboring property. The conditions of the order would provide safeguards to mitigate community concerns, should they arise. Any changes to be made in the school's operations or student and staff enrollment would require the Board's review and community comments.

V. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

At its regularly held meeting on March 18, 2014, ANC 3F voted to support the requested increase and oppose the permanent special exception. The ANC's report is submitted under separate cover.

VI. AGENCY COMMENTS

The District Department of Transportation submitted its comments to the Board on April 2, 2014.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Office of Planning reviewed the application in terms of the standards for special exception relief and recommends approval of the continued operation of the school and the requested increase in enrollment, subject to the conditions included in the applicant's April 1, 2014 submission.