



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772
www.pgplanning.org

PGCPB No. 2020-151

File No. DSDS-709

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the Prince George's County Planning Board has reviewed Departure from Sign Design Standards Application No. DSDS-709 Bishop McNamara High School, requesting approval in accordance with Subtitle 27 of the Prince George's County Code; and

WHEREAS, after consideration of the evidence presented at the public hearing on October 22, 2020, the Prince George's County Planning Board finds:

1. **Request:** The site is occupied by an existing school. The departure requests are based on conditions provided in PGCPB Resolution No. 19-133 of Detailed Site Plan DSP-00013-06, which was approved by the Prince George's County Planning Board on December 5, 2020, for construction of an addition to the existing private school. The departure request seeks to modify the sign criteria for institutional uses, as set forth in Section 27-617 of the Zoning Ordinance, to address the conditions of DSP-00013-06. The subject departure request satisfies the criteria for approval, as set forth in Section 27-588(b)(7) of the Zoning Ordinance. The departure request is supported by a statement of justification (SOJ), dated July 15, 2020, submitted by the applicant, and incorporated by reference herein. The departure request is as follows:

- a. The applicant requested a Departure from Sign Design Standards (DSDS-709), in order to allow a sign area that is 3 square feet larger than the allowable sign area, for a total of 51 square feet, and to allow a second rooftop sign along the site frontage. Per Section 27-617, the site is permitted to have one sign per street frontage and a maximum sign area of 48 square feet.

It is noted that the applicant also requested a Departure from Parking and Loading Spaces (DPLS-482), to reduce the minimum number of required off-street parking spaces by 70 spaces. Bishop McNamara High School, a private school with 234 students below 10th grade and 600 students 10th grade and above, requires a minimum of 239 off-street parking spaces per Section 27-568(a). The school currently provides 169 parking spaces on-site and 70 parking spaces on the adjacent property of Mount Calvary Catholic Church. This request was also approved by the Planning Board on October 22, 2020 and is memorialized in PGCPB Resolution No. 2020-150.

2. **Development Data Summary:** The following chart summarizes the approved development for the subject property.

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| | EXISTING |
| Zone | C-S-C/R-55/M-I-O |
| Use(s) | Private School |
| Total Acreage | 14.53 |
| Number of Parcels | 2 |
| Gross Floor Area | 126,775 sq. ft. |

3. **Location:** The subject property is comprised of two parcels. The first parcel, Parcel 150, is a legal acreage parcel, is 13,540 square feet, zoned Commercial Shopping Center (C-S-C), and is recorded in the Prince George's County Land Records in Liber 37421 folio 564. The second parcel is 14.22 acres, in the One-Family Detached Residential Zone (R-55), and is the subject of Preliminary Plan of Subdivision 12-1905, approved on May 15, 1963 and recorded in Plat Book WWW 47-66. The record plat does not contain any notes, and no parcel designation was assigned to this property. The subject site is located in Tax Map 81, Grid D3, is addressed as 6800 Marlboro Pike in Forestville, and is within the Military Installation Overlay Zone.
4. **Surrounding Uses:** The subject site is bounded to the north by detached single-family dwellings in the R-55 Zone, to the west by a church and private school in the R-55 Zone, to the east by detached single-family dwellings in the R-55 and C-S-C zones, and to the south by the Marlboro Pike right-of-way. Beyond Marlboro Pike are condominiums in the Multifamily Medium Density Residential – Condominium Zone.
5. **Previous Approvals:** DSP-00013, for the property, was approved by the Planning Board on March 1, 2001, and formalized by the adoption of PGCPB Resolution No. 01-44 on March 8, 2001. The most recent revision to the DSP occurred on January 9, 2020, when the Planning Board approved DSP-00013-06 to add the 20,655-square-foot La Reine Science & Innovation Center to the Bishop McNamara campus. The approval included a courtyard area, fencing, stormwater management, and other necessary infrastructure for the La Reine Science & Innovation Center, as well as an increase in student enrollment from 796 students to 834 students (PGCPB Resolution No. 19-133). The full list of prior approvals is as follows:

March 1, 2001 – DSP-00013, Alternative Compliance Application, AC-00047 and Type II Tree Conservation Plan, TCPII-94-00, were approved by the Planning Board and formalized via the adoption of PGCPB Resolution No. 01-44 on March 8, 2001 for the addition of a fine arts and athletic center.

April 13, 2001 – Departure from Design Standards, DDS-519, for the 50-foot setback of the loading space from residentially zoned land, (Section 27-579(B) of the Zoning Ordinance), was approved by the Planning Board (PBCPB Resolution No. 01-44).

March 19, 2008 – DSP-00013-01 and TCPII-94-00-01 were approved by the Planning Director for the addition of a chapel, an entrance awning along the front of the building, a guidance counseling center, book store, library expansion, and upgrades to the east cafeteria elevation along the east side of the existing building.

October 10, 2012 – Natural Resources Inventory, NRI-134-12 was approved by the Environmental Planning Section to place a temporary classroom trailer in the parking lot.

August 23, 2013 – AC-13011 was approved by the Planning Director for Section 4.7 of the 2010 *Prince George's County Landscape Manual* (Landscape Manual), (Buffering incompatible uses).

August 30, 2013 – DSP-00013-02 was approved by the Planning Director for the addition of a temporary classroom building and for modifying or adding various signs and scoreboard.

February 14, 2017 – DSP-00013-04 was withdrawn due to the Planning Department determining that a revision to the DSP was not required because the improvements proposed, renovation of the softball field, was not located on Bishop McNamara property.

March 2, 2017 – DSP-00013-03, AC-13011-01, and TCPII-94-00-02, were approved by the Planning Director to add a 3,740-square-foot cafeteria, increasing student enrollment to 796 students, and add 0.32 acre to the DSP area.

October 20, 2017 – DSP-00013-05 was approved by the Planning Director, for the addition of an exterior stairwell on the southeast corner of the existing school building, to provide emergency egress from the basement boiler space.

February 26, 2018 – NRI-134-12-01 was approved by the Environmental Planning Section for the construction of a science building.

March 6, 2019 – Site Development Concept Plan No. 37844-2018 was approved by the Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement.

November 18, 2019 – Revised NRI-134-12-02 was approved by the Environmental Planning Section, for the construction of a science building, in accordance with Condition 2(d) of PGCPB Resolution No. 19-133.

6. Zoning Ordinance Sign Requirements for Institutional Uses: Section 27-617 provides the following institutional sign regulations, which pertain to the subject site:

(a) In any zone (except Comprehensive Design and Mixed Use Zones) where a church; library; school; hospital; fire station; community center; day care center for children; service, fraternal, or civic organization; or other similar institution is allowed, a sign may be erected. Institutional signs shall meet the following design standards:

- (1) Maximum area for each sign – 48 square feet.**
- (2) Maximum height – 8 feet above finished grade at base of sign.**
- (3) Minimum setback – 15 feet from adjoining land in any Residential Zone**

(or land proposed to be used for residential purposes in a Comprehensive Design, Mixed use, or Planned Community Zone).

- (4) Type allowed – freestanding or attached to a building.**
- (5) Maximum number – 1 per street the property front on (must face street frontage).**

The applicant claims that the specific signage requirements for institutional uses provided in Section 27-617(a) are restrictive and have resulted in the need for numerous prior departure applications for similar institutional uses. Based on the reasons stated below, the applicant requested a departure from Sections 27-617(a)(1) and 27-617(a)(5) to permit a total sign area of 51 square feet and a total of two signs per street the property fronts on (Marlboro Pike).

Departure from Sign Design Standards: When the requested departure is from the permissible locations for a sign, the required findings for approval are set forth in Section 27-239.01(b)(7). The required findings are shown in **BOLD** below, with staff responses in plain text following:

(7) Required findings.

(A) In order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:

- (i) The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal;**

The building's architectural features and signage were designed to be oriented towards Marlboro Pike. The western end of the building, which will also be visible from Marlboro Pike, will include height transitions, a circular glass design and a fiberglass spire on the top of the building to serve as a modern-day tribute to the original La Reine High School building.

The south elevation facing Marlboro Pike includes four large sets of spandrel glass windows that vary in size and shape and that are separated by decorative corrugated metal panels. The face of the building will consist of flush seam metal panels. Rooftop signage will display the school name utilizing individual metal letters. The circular endpiece has been designed with glass and high-density masonry materials. The building name will be displayed in individual metal letters that are mounted on decorative metal rings. The proposed signage has been carefully designed to be complementary to the proposed building and the surrounding neighborhood in general and is an integral part of the La Reine Science & Innovation Center's modern architectural design. This project's design and architecture will raise the bar of quality for all future development on adjacent properties and will be a catalyst for revitalization along this section of Marlboro Pike. In order to achieve the desired architectural allure, effective visibility, and identification of the building on the school campus, the proposed

signage of the secondary rooftop sign minimally departs from the maximum sign area by three additional square feet. As a result, the purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.

(ii) The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request;

The departure is the minimum necessary to allow for the applicant to provide signage that meets the dual purpose of complimenting/accentuating the architecture of the La Reine Science & Innovation Center, but will also provide necessary site and building identification for Bishop McNamara High School. As part of the total project, the existing monument sign along Marlboro Pike will be removed to make way for construction of the La Reine Science & Innovation Center. The additional 3 square feet of sign area and 1 additional building sign facing the street, as proposed through the subject DSDS application, will compensate for the loss of the existing entrance signage.

(iii) The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances, which are unique to the site or prevalent in areas of the County developed prior to November 29, 1949;

The property has a unique and irregular shape, which requires the majority of its buildings to be placed far back from its entrance along Marlboro Pike. The La Reine Science & Innovation Center will front along Marlboro Pike, as per the recommendations of the Marlboro Pike Sector Plan and SMA. The visibility of the main school building, which will be located directly behind the La Reine Science & Innovation Center, will be greatly diminished from Marlboro Pike. As a result, the building signage that is proposed will not only need to identify the building as the La Reine Science & Innovation Center, but also serve to identify the Bishop McNamara campus in general.

(iv) The departure will not impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.

The subject property is located in a Transition Area within the Marlboro Pike Sector Plan and SMA. The Sector Plan defines a Transition Area as, "Secondary locations that can provide opportunities for new development along the corridor," (i.e. Marlboro Pike Corridor), (page 43). As demonstrated during the review of DSP-00013-06, the architecture and building signage for the La Reine Science & Innovation Center were carefully designed to be in harmony with the design guidelines that apply to Transition Areas (page 109), and in particular the following design guideline:

- 1. Encourage the use of traditional architectural styles that offer pedestrian-friendly and compact development patterns using**

building form and materials that are complementary to the surrounding neighborhoods – such as the use of front porches, consistent setbacks, and building to the property line.

The proposed building has been designed to include height transitions along all four sides of the building and to feature materials that are complementary to the surrounding neighborhood. The northern elevation facing the courtyard includes a glass wall entrance with curtainwall system that allows natural light to penetrate deeper within the building, a high awning to provide shelter, and a height transition at the center of the building. The materials for the building will be complimentary to the existing structures on the property and the surrounding neighborhood in general.

The multipurpose, pedestrian-friendly, outdoor Legacy Courtyard, situated between the main school building and the proposed La Reine Science & Innovation Center, will pay tribute to the Bernadine Sisters and the Brothers of Holy Cross. The courtyard area will feature a fountain, reflecting pool, contemplative garden, and an outdoor learning commons. The interior of the courtyard will not be visible from Marlboro Pike.

The courtyard area will be enclosed on the north and east sides by the existing main school building, by the proposed La Reine Science & Innovation Center on the south side, and by a proposed decorative wall and iron fencing on the west.

The building signage, as proposed, will include the following:

SIGN 1: **Round Innovation Lab Sign, (consisting of 15-inch-high ribbon font metal letters attached to frame and tubes extended from the building).

Total Individual Letters Area = 31.09 square feet, less 50% = **16 square feet.**

SIGN 2: *Street Address Sign at West Façade, (consisting of 1 foot metal ribbon font letters attached to the building).

SIGN 3: *Street Address Sign at Fence, (consisting of 1 foot metal ribbon font letters attached to the fence).

**SIGN 4: **Campus Identification Sign, (consisting of 2-foot-high ribbon font metal letters supported by pipe and angle frame below).
Total Individual Letters Area = 69.56 square feet, less 50% = **35 square feet.****

*Street Address Signs not subject to requirements of Part 11, per Section 27-590(d) of the Zoning Ordinance.

**50% Reduction permitted, per Section 27-591(a) of the Zoning Ordinance.

Based on the preceding analysis, the required findings for approval set forth in Section 27-239.01(b)(7)(A) are met for DSDS-709.

7. Further Planning Board Findings and Comments from Other Entities: The relevant comments submitted from referred agencies for this application were included in the above analysis. The following referral memorandums were received, and are incorporated by reference herein:

- Urban Design Section, dated September 28, 2020 (Burke to Sievers)
- Historic Preservation Section, dated September 11, 2020 (Stabler to Sievers)
- Community Planning Section, dated September 25, 2020 (Byrd to Sievers)
- Transportation Planning Section, dated September 25, 2020 (Hancock to Sievers)
- Environmental Planning Section, dated September 21, 2020 (Nickle to Sievers)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to Subtitle 27 of the Prince George's County Code, the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission adopted the findings contained herein and APPROVED the above-noted application for one additional sign and signs that are a total of 51 square feet in size.

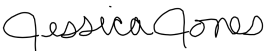
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board's action must be filed with the District Council for Prince George's County, Maryland within thirty (30) days of the final notice of the Planning Board's decision.

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This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the motion of Commissioner Washington, seconded by Commissioner Geraldo, with Commissioners Washington, Geraldo, Bailey, Doerner and Hewlett voting in favor of the motion at its regular meeting held on Thursday, October 22, 2020, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

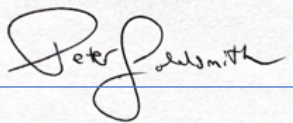
Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 12th day of November, 2020.

Elizabeth M. Hewlett
Chairman

By 
Jessica Jones
Planning Board Administrator

EMH:JJ:TS:nz

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL SUFFICIENCY



M-NCPPC Legal Department
Date: October 27, 2020