

Agenda Item 11. Biscuit Run Development Update

Subject: Biscuit Run Development School Site	Date: <u>April 27, 2006</u>
Policy Reference <u>FB</u>	Enclosures: <u>4</u>
Strategic Plan Goal Reference <u>#5</u>	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION: Action _____ Information <u>X</u>

Background (Purpose)

Biscuit Run is one of the largest parcels of undeveloped land, at 920 acres, that is located in the growth area, and is now under consideration for rezoning. The property has the potential of developing between 2,500 and 4,970 dwelling units in a variety of types, along with commercial and retail space, to comply with the County's desired Neighborhood Model. The development could produce as many as 600 elementary students depending on the final residential product and the number of units that are offered for sale. However, it is probable that the number of units will be less than the maximum noted above, which may reduce the estimated number of students. In numerous meetings and conversations with the developer and Planning Staff, School Division staff has stated, "We would request a minimum of 12 usable acres for a neighborhood elementary school or 15 usable acres for a "Community Park" Elementary School. A development of this size will also produce the need for additions at Walton Middle School and Monticello High School, thus a monetary proffer would also be appropriate to help subsidize the cost of the additions."

Enclosure 1 is the applicant's description of the property with its anticipated uses. Enclosure 2 is a copy of the school section of the Community Facilities Plan, which outlines objectives and standards for all schools. Particularly note the difference in recreational facilities required for a Neighborhood School and a "Community Park" School, as noted on page 164.

One of the primary reasons for accepting a smaller elementary school site that is more centrally located in the development, is the ability for students and parents to walk to school. Thousands of articles exist on the subject of school "walkability", most of which support the benefits of walking to school. One of the most quoted is noted in Enclosure 3, an article entitled *Barriers to Children Walking to or from School*, which states, "Study results also indicated that students aged 5—11 years were more likely to walk to school than were those aged 12—18 years; however, this difference was not significant. One possible reason for this difference is that elementary schools are likely to be closer to children's homes because they outnumber junior and senior high schools in the United States (more than 70,000 elementary schools compared with approximately 28,000 junior and senior high schools). This hypothesis is supported by the finding that parents of older children more frequently cited distance as a barrier, whereas parents of younger children more frequently cited other barriers."

Enclosure 4 contains a General District Block Plan of the development with three possible school sites illustrated. The current proffer, which is Block 25, a 92-acre parcel, for an elementary school site and district park, has been proposed. Approximately 45 acres of this land is useable according to the developer. Under the direction of the school staff, two additional hypothetical sites are also illustrated for discussion purposes and they are located in Block 7 and 24. The site in Block 7 contains a total of 13.1 acres with 11.5 usable acres and it is found near the center of the development in response to the Neighborhood Model. The site in Block 24 contains 25.8 acres with approximately 13.2 usable and it is located in the North West corner of the property. Please note that the last two options have not been proposed by the developer or reviewed by the planning staff. The schematic illustrations of all three sites were developed to make sure that all major program elements could be accommodated on the site. We will ask Planning Staff and the developer to comment on the two additional sites during their presentation.

Three additional diagrams that show a half-mile and mile radius line from each proposed site. This provides a graphic representation of the distance from each site to surrounding, existing and potential neighborhoods.

Administrative Consideration (Rationale)

According to the County Comprehensive Plan, a school is allowed by right on the proposed parcel and the water and sewer jurisdictional area can be extended to this property because it is adjacent to the development area. Walkable schools, particularly ones that are part of a walkable community are perceived as very desirable and provide many benefits to those that take advantage of the opportunity. As with every issue, there are pros and cons. One concern reported by the Public Schools of North Carolina, in *Making Current Trends in School Design Feasible* (<http://www.schoolclearinghouse.org/pubs/small.pdf>) was stated as, "Diversity must also be considered with walkable schools. In most communities and neighborhoods, housing is mostly homogenous: very little diversity can be found with regard to socio economic status, race or ethnic origin. This same lack of diversity will be reflected in walkable schools that are established to serve these neighborhoods."

Another point of discussion concerns existing students living in close proximity to Biscuit Run. In 2004/05, there were 337 elementary students that lived in the 5th Street and Old Lynchburg Road area near this development; therefore it is a good possibility that at least part of these students would attend the Biscuit Run School. The Planning Commission will have another work session on this issue on April 18, 2006. Therefore, additional information may be available prior to the April 27th School Board meeting.

Budget Implications (Short and Long Term)

The Community Facilities Plan states, "An objective of this Community Facility Plan is to provide adequate parks and recreational facilities through the utilization of school facilities. The result is the non-duplication of many recreation facilities, which saves the County on costs associated with providing land and recreational facilities, and provides for more effective use of existing public facilities. Therefore, it is important that school sites are adequately sized to function effectively as Community and District Parks. This plan does provide for greater flexibility in elementary school design by allowing for a smaller school site based on providing additional "community park" facilities at other locations within the community, and not at an elementary school." As we compete for CIP Funding with Local Government agencies, it becomes more important than ever to obtain facilities through proffers and to combine efforts to reduce expenditures.

Recommendation/Future Direction/Time Line

Receive the presented information for comment and clarification. If desired, staff can be directed to prepare an agenda item for May 2006, so that the Board can decide on which site they prefer.

Agenda Item 12. Budget Work Session

Agenda Item 13. Retreat Planning Session

Agenda Item 14. Other Business by Board Members/Superintendent

Agenda Item 15. Closed Meeting

Agenda Item 16. Certify Closed Meeting.

Agenda Item 17. Adjournment