



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting of November 15, 2008**

**DATE:** October 30, 2008

**SUBJECT:** U-1146-54-2 USE PERMIT AMENDMENT clubhouse addition to existing pool bathhouse, parking reduction; 411 N. Jefferson St. (RPC # 13-043-018, -019, -050)

**Applicant:**

Arlington Forest Club, Inc.

**By:**

Karen Serfis, Vice President  
515 N Jackson St  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

**C. M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Approve the use permit amendment, subject to the previously approved condition, and new Conditions #1-9, and with a County Board review either six (6) months after the issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy or in three (3) years (November 2011), whichever is sooner.

**ISSUE:** This is a use permit amendment to construct a multipurpose room addition to an existing bathhouse at an existing swim club and a request for a reduction in the parking required by the current zoning ordinance. The main issue is whether the applicant should be allowed to maintain the nonconforming number of parking spaces.

**SUMMARY:** The applicant requests a use permit amendment to construct a second-story multipurpose room addition of 1,200 square feet to the existing one-story bathhouse at the Arlington Forest Club located at 411 North Jefferson Street. The property has an existing use permit for a swim club and bathhouse, granted by the County Board in 1954. The property currently has a paved 43 space main parking lot, and an unimproved, unstriped gravel auxiliary parking lot that the applicant estimates can accommodate about 37 cars. While the zoning ordinance requires 166 parking spaces for the club's facilities, the applicant proposes to improve the existing auxiliary parking lot, but not expand the total parking beyond the current 80 spaces. Staff supports this request as the use is seasonal, and only a few days in that season when the maximum amount of parking is required. Additionally, the Club primarily serves the surrounding neighborhood and has convenient bicycle and pedestrian access to justify the parking reduction request. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the use permit amendment,

County Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff: Peter Schulz, CPHD, Planning Division

PLA-5113

subject to all previously approved conditions, new Conditions #1-9, and with a County Board review either six (6) months after the issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy or in three (3) years (November 2011), whichever is sooner.

**BACKGROUND:** The Arlington Forest Club has been in continuous operation since the County Board approved a use permit for a “swim club and bathhouse” in 1954. There are also four tennis courts, a basketball court, and a picnic area. The only other County Board action until now was in 1996 when the County Board accepted withdrawal of a use permit amendment request to expand the parking lot.

Site: The site is a 3.6 acre lot on the north side of South Carlin Springs Road, bounded by North Harrison Street and two single-family residences on the east, the Bluemont Trail and Bluemont Junction Park (zoned “S-3A”) on the north, and unbuilt North Jefferson Street right-of-way on the west.

Zoning: The site is zoned “R-6” One-Family Dwelling District. “Community swimming pools” are permitted by special exception use permit by reference to Zoning Ordinance Section 5.A.6.a.(3). A multipurpose room is an allowed part of “clubs and grounds for games or sports...not operated primarily for commercial gain”, which are also allowed by reference to Section 5.A.6.a.(3).

Land Use: The majority of the site is designated on the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) as “Semi-Public” (*Country clubs and semi-public recreational facilities. Churches, private schools and private cemeteries (predominant use on block).*) Small portions of the site are also designated “Public” (*Parks (local, regional, and federal). Schools (public). Parkways, major unpaved rights-of-way. Libraries and cultural facilities*); and “Low” Residential (1-10 units/acre).

Neighborhood: The site is located within the Bluemont Civic Association, and abuts the Arlington Forest Citizens Association. Both Civic Associations support the applicant’s request, including the parking reduction. Letters are attached.

**DISCUSSION:** The Arlington Forest Club has been a neighborhood fixture since 1954. It is a non-profit membership organization, and the facilities are open only to members (and guests of members). The bylaws limit membership to 675 households. Access to the entire site is controlled by a fence and gate, and members must show identification to enter. The swimming pool is seasonal, and is open from mid-May to the first week of September, and is the main focus of activity on the site. Activity in the off season is minimal; a staff visit on a warm fall day showed the club closed and no activity on site.

The existing bathhouse is one story, and consists of changing rooms and a snack bar. The club proposes to construct a second story addition to the bathhouse to create a multi-purpose room with a kitchen. The project would also include upgrading the existing 50-year-old bathhouse for

ADA access. The proposed addition is within the Zoning Ordinance limitations for non-residential structures in the R-6 zoning district, with the major exception of parking.

The Arlington Forest Club is nonconforming to the Zoning Ordinance's parking requirements for one (1) parking space for every 40 square feet of pool area and three (3) parking spaces per tennis court. The required number of parking spaces for the existing uses on site is 142 spaces. However, the Club currently has 43 paved, standard parking spaces that meet zoning ordinance requirements and has access from North Harrison Street. There is also a gravel lot that can accommodate approximately 37 cars. This gravel lot is not marked or striped, but does have a curb cut access from North Jefferson Street. The applicant agrees to upgrade this parking lot to the standards required by the Zoning Ordinance and the Department of Environmental Services. There are legal on-street parking spaces on both sides of North Harrison Street. There is no on-street parking along Carlin Springs Road.

The proposed 1,200 square foot multi-purpose room would require 24 additional parking spaces, for a total of 166 required parking spaces. While the zoning ordinance requires 166 parking spaces, it is important to note that all facilities: the pool, bathhouse, basketball court, tennis courts, and the proposed multi-purpose room are within the fenced area and the maximum capacity of the entire club grounds is limited by the maximum capacity of the pool. The maximum capacity of the pool is 224 people. The pool alone requires 130 parking spaces.

The applicant proposes to keep the total number of spaces to the present 80 (including the gravel spaces proposed to be improved). While this is a large reduction, staff supports it for the following reasons:

The biggest generator of parking demand are the children's swim meets held at the swimming pool, which is open seasonally from mid-May to early September, and to a lesser extent, tennis tournaments in the spring and fall. The club usually hosts seven (7) swim meets per year. Information from area residents and from the club indicate that the only time both parking lots are at maximum capacity and cars park in surrounding streets are during these swim meets.

Attached are the applicant's own surveys of the transportation and parking demands of their members. The applicant's survey indicates an average of 3.3 people per car for people using the pool. Staff notes that while the pool has scheduled "adult swim" times during the season, where there is a higher probability of single-occupant vehicles, the remainder of the swim schedule is for all ages, and children are almost always accompanied by an adult and thus vehicle trips are combined. The Club's own survey shows that some pool users walk and bike because of the close proximity of their home to the Club. Also, there is some evidence that during free swims there is carpooling, e.g. a parent driving their children and their children's friends to the pool together. Swim lessons for children can result more often in drop-offs and pick-ups, rather than parents parking for the duration of the lesson.

The Club is immediately adjacent to the Bluemont Trail, and in fact a well-marked and – maintained spur of the trail with a direct connection to North Harrison Street and to the Club's

entrance gate. The Club has eight racks that accommodate 16 bicycles. There is also convenient and safe pedestrian access to the club: There are sidewalks on the east, west, and south sides of the property, and to the north, pedestrians on North Illinois Street can easily cross the Bluemont Trail and walk along the sidewalk on the west side of North Harrison Street to the Club gate. The biggest obstacle to pedestrians is four-lane Carlin Springs Road (there is a crosswalk currently), but pedestrian crossings will be made much easier by summer 2009 when the Department of Environmental Services constructs a pedestrian-activated caution signal at the intersection of Harrison Street and Carlin Springs Road. The Club has agreed to contribute \$5,000 to the construction of the pedestrian light.

The only facility that could have year-round use is the multi-purpose room, which requires 24 parking spaces. The applicant's proposed 80 spaces would more than cover events at the multi-purpose room. The applicant has stated that the multipurpose room would not be hired out for commercial events, and would be used only for members' meetings and events.

The applicant has presented their plans to the two closest Civic Associations, Bluemont and Arlington Forest, and received explicit support from the Associations for not adding more parking than is already on site. Attached are the letters of support.

The applicant had planned that this project be commenced by 2009, however, because of the uncertain economy and credit markets, and because the applicant needs to conduct a fund-raising campaign to construct the bathhouse addition and improve the parking lot, staff is requesting that the Board extend approval of this use permit for three (3) years per Zoning Ordinance Section 36.G.2 (*"Construction or operation shall be commenced within one (1) year of date of issuance or the use permit becomes void; provided however, that in granting a use permit the County Board may extend this period for up to three (3) years upon its determination that addition time is needed to commence construction or operation."*). While the Club believes that 2010 is a likely date to begin construction, staff recommends approval be extended for the full three (3) years to November 2011, with a County Board review either six (6) months after of the issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy or November 2011, whichever comes sooner. If construction has not commenced by November 2011, the use permit expires and the applicant must reapply for County Board approval.

**CONCLUSION:** The proposed addition will not have a major impact on the operations of the Club; the applicant has agreed to improve the auxiliary parking lot to zoning standards and in a manner acceptable to the Department of Environmental Services, and staff is satisfied that the existing 80 parking spaces are adequate for the ordinary daily use of the club. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the use permit amendment subject to new Conditions #1-9, and with a County Board review either six (6) months after the issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy or in three (3) years (November 2011), whichever is sooner.

New Conditions:

1. All new construction shall meet the requirements of the Code Enforcement Office, the

Environmental Health Bureau, and the Fire Department, including securing the required assembly permit as specified by the Fire Marshal's Office.

2. The applicant must commence construction of the proposed improvements by November 15, 2011. If construction has not commenced by that date, the use permit becomes void.
3. The applicant agrees to improve the auxiliary parking lot with 37 parking spaces in conformance with Section 33 of the Zoning Ordinance and improved with a material acceptable to the Department of Environmental Services, including but not limited to pervious materials such as grasscrete. Before construction of the parking lot commences, the applicant shall submit to the Zoning Office a landscape plan for the improved parking lot per Zoning Ordinance Section 32A.B. The total number of parking spaces on the Club property shall be no fewer than 80.
4. The applicant agrees to maintain bicycle parking spaces for a minimum of 16 bicycles.
5. The applicant agrees that the addition to the bathhouse conform to the size, placement, and height as shown on the drawings entitled "September 2008 Arlington Forest Club Improvements" as presented to the County Board on November 15, 2008. Modifications to the final design may be approved by the Zoning Administrator in conformance with Zoning Ordinance Section 36.G.7.
6. The applicant agrees to designate a neighborhood liaison to communicate with nearby residents and neighbors to address concerns that may be related to the use. The name and telephone number of the liaison shall be submitted by the applicant to the Zoning Administrator, as well as to the Bluemont Civic Association and the Arlington Forest Citizens Association, prior to issuance of any building permit.
7. The applicant agrees to contribute \$5,000 toward the cost of installing the pedestrian-activated caution light at the intersection of Carlin Springs Road and North Harrison Street, prior to the issuance of any building permit.
8. The applicant agrees to not hold events in the multipurpose room at the same time as high-usage events such as swim meets and tennis tournaments.
9. The applicant agrees to continue to tie maximum number of people allowed to occupy the club grounds at any one to the maximum allowable occupancy of the swimming pool (224 people).

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| August 21, 1954   | Approved use permit (U-1146-54-2) for a swimming pool and bathhouse.   |
| July 8, 1995      | Deferred a use permit amendment to incorporate vacated street right-of-way and additional Club-owned property into the Use Permit area and provide additional parking in this area to September 9, 1995.               |
| September 9, 1995 | Deferred a use permit amendment to incorporate vacated street right-of-way and additional Club-owned property into the Use Permit area and provide additional parking in this area to the first meeting of March 1996. |
| March 9, 1996     | Deferred a use permit amendment to incorporate vacated street right-of-way and additional Club-owned property into the Use Permit area and provide additional parking in this area to December 7, 1996.                |
| December 7, 1996  | Accepted withdrawal of a use permit amendment to incorporate vacated street right-of-way and additional Club-owned property into the Use Permit area and provide additional parking in this area.                      |