

LEEWARD PLANNING COMMISSION
COUNTY OF HAWAI'I

HEARING TRANSCRIPT
OCTOBER 16, 2009

A regularly advertised hearing on the applications of **PARKER SCHOOL (USE 05-001)** was called to order at 10:05 a.m. in the Waikoloa Beach Marriott Hotel, Ali'i III Room, 69-275 Waikoloa Drive, Waikoloa, Hawai'i, with Chairman Rodney Watanabe presiding.

PRESENT: Rodney Watanabe
Brandi Beaudet
Geraldine Giffin
Frederic Housel
Wayne Iokepa

Bill Brillhante, Deputy Corporation Counsel
BJ Leithead Todd, Planning Director
Norman Hayashi, Planning Program Manager
Phyllis Fujimoto, Staff Planner
Jeff Darrow, Staff Planner
Maija Cottle, Staff Planner

ABSENT & EXCUSED: Lani Bowman

And four people from the public in attendance

APPLICANT: PARKER SCHOOL (USE 05-001)

Amendment to Use Permit No. 05-001 to allow the expansion of the Parker School complex to 14.32 acres situated within the Agricultural 1-acre (A-1a) and Single-Family Residential 7,500 square feet (RS-7.5) zoned district. The amendment is to allow the expansion of the school facilities which would include the construction of a new gymnasium, athletic fields, a new middle school complex and educational use of an existing warehouse structure. The property is located between Kapi'olani Street and Waikoloa Stream, Waimea, South Kohala, Hawai'i, TMK: 6-5-4:25, 26, 28 and 63.

WATANABE: We are on Agenda Item No. 3. The applicant is Parker School. It's Use Permit 05-001. Maija, are you going to formally advise of the request?

COTTLE: Sure.

WATANABE: Okay, great.

COTTLE: Actually, I guess I'll leave it up to the Commission whether they want a presentation of the application. We did receive a letter on October 7th from the applicant requesting a continuance of the application to the next hearing.

WATANABE: If there are no objections, you know, as I stated earlier, we do have a light agenda, so probably there are people that made some plans, yeah, in the assumption that the meeting would go short. And we would, when we do take this up again, have an opportunity to see the same presentation. And according to this, there is no one from the public signed up to testify. So let me, let me take this moment now because I see some people that are here from Waimea. Is there anyone that actually wishes to testify on this? Okay, okay, then please, we'll allow you to testify – I lost my place now – maybe what we can do is forego the presentation, yeah, and then, if there are no objections from the -.

HOUSEL: Mr. Chairman?

WATANABE: Yea, Mr. Housel.

HOUSEL: Since – I don't know about the other Commissioners but – I didn't receive a background package on this one, and so I would be interested in learning a little more about it.

WATANABE: Oh, okay, okay. Well, we do have one request to have the presentation, so maybe we should proceed with the presentation.

COTTLE: I can do that. The reason that you don't have background and recommendation material is because we were withholding the recommendation at this time until the applicant has time to meet with community groups that brought up concerns about traffic and other issues in the area. So would you still like me to proceed with the presentation?

HOUSEL: I would. I'd like to learn a little more just to get an overview of the project.

WATANABE: Okay, then maybe we can go ahead and do that. I, you know, certainly I'm not trying to withhold information.

COTTLE: Okay. I don't mind it at all. So the applicant's request is to amend Special – I'm sorry, not Special Permit – Use Permit 05-001. This was granted in 2005 to establish an elementary school on this large piece of property shown here outlined in black. The existing elementary school, it's on the ground now, that was approved under Use Permit 05-001 is located right about here. And the applicant's request now is to amend that Permit in order to allow the school to expand to adjacent properties that they've recently acquired – there're two small residential lots, as well as this kind of round lot here. And they are also requesting to expand to use this entire large parcel here.

So as you can see, the property is zoned Agricultural, and then the two small lots are zoned Single-Family Residential. There is also the original Parker School campus, which includes the high school and middle school, is located on these properties here that are zoned Commercial. They did not ever receive a Use Permit for that original campus because a school use is allowed in the Commercial zoning. So the expansion would link, through these two parcels, it would link this whole area into one campus.

The General Plan designation for the area is Medium-Density Urban, and that's shown in orange. There is the Waimea Park here across Lindsey Road, which is shown in green.

And so this just again goes over what the specific amendment request is. They are requesting to expand the school complex to adjacent properties as shown on their master plan – and that will be included in your background material. They are also requesting to allow Waimea Community Education, which is a non-profit run by the Parker School Trust, to use all of the school facilities. And they are requesting to remove a 90-student enrollment cap, which was, on the existing elementary school, which was included as a condition of their original Use Permit.

So here is the master plan. And again you can see the original campus that includes the high school and the middle school, as well as a parking lot that gets access off of Lindsey Road. There is also a school drop-off and pick-up area along Lindsey Road in this area. And the existing elementary school that was permitted under Use Permit 05-001 is in this area. There is also an existing parking lot; it's smaller than what's shown here. So they are proposing to expand this parking lot as well, and then add a gymnasium and add a future middle school building, and then the students from the existing middle school here would transfer over to the new building, and the original campus in this area would be devoted mostly to high school use. And again you can see the two small residential parcels. There're currently single-family dwellings on those lots, and they are requesting to use those dwellings for educational purposes.

Kapi'olani Street runs at the top of the slide in the east-west direction. So there would be a point of access here into the existing parking lot, as well as a little access here next to the existing warehouse. And then the other main entrance to the school would be off of Lindsey Road here, and then I also mentioned the existing drop-off and pick-up area. So this is a view of Kapi'olani Road looking west; so you are looking at the park area and you can see it's a two-lane road with some grass shoulders. This is a view of Kapi'olani Road looking east; the current elementary school driveway or access is right in this area. There are some single-family residential lots, I think four of them, and then beyond that is the warehouse along Kapi'olani that they are proposing to convert to educational use. And you can see the view of Pu'ukū Road looking north towards Kapi'olani Street; so this is the road that the two residential lots are off of, and one of the lots is actually right over here and then I'm standing taking the picture at the entrance of the other lot. This is a view of the current school drop-off and pick-up area on Lindsey Road; so you are looking south – you can see the Māmalahoa Highway-Lindsey Road intersection off in the distance, and then Kawaihae Road is kind of looping around here, and so parents would pull around here, and then this is a long stretch where they can drop off and pick up their children. There is also a crosswalk here that leads to the park and, I believe, a school bus stop over on this side of the street as well.

So that concludes the presentation. Did you have any questions?

HOUSEL: Thank you.

COTTLE: You're welcome.

WATANABE: No further questions? I have one question for the Director. That's quite a bit of additional improvement. And not that I'm stating any opposition, but typically we, you know, state, oh, you need to make these completions within five years. They're not going to make that many improvements in five years, huh?

LEITHEAD TODD: Well, we are waiting for them to come back. And then when we are able to review the total package, then we'll look at the timeline. You know, I think it's good to have the view of what their long-range plan is for the property.

WATANABE: Yeah, I don't disagree -.

LEITHEAD TODD: But you know, it depends on what they come in with and what kind of fundraising, so it may be that we may not be looking at a five-year for the entire thing – we don't know. I'd like to see what they come in with. Private schools seem to be able to come up with more money than public.

WATANABE: Thank you, thank you. Okay, with that, we do have one individual signed up from the public – Margaret Wille. And you are a familiar face, so I think you recall the routine.

WILLE: Yes.

WATANABE: May I swear you in, Margaret?

WILLE: Yes.

WATANABE: Right hand, please. Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth now before the Planning Commission?

WILLE: Yes, I do.

WATANABE: The mike, please.

WILLE: Yes, I do.

WATANABE: Okay, thank you. And then name and address before you begin your testimony.

WILLE: Okay. Margaret Wille, 65-1316 Lihipali Road, Kamuela, Hawai'i. And I want to express that I'm here speaking on my own behalf and not representing any entity. And I really just stopped by to see if the, assuming that the application was going to be postponed, and I knew that there wasn't any submittal available for anyone to look at from the, the Director's submittal. And let me say I am on the Waimea, the Board of Directors for Waimea Community Association – again, though I'm only speaking on my own behalf – and a co-chair of the Waimea Design and Review Committee. So at this point – and I think it's good that you hear, start to hear what's going on in this case, and I'm not in any way objecting to it being taken up even

though the submittal wasn't available – but on the 21st our Committee, myself and my co-chair, Jim Bell, are facilitating a meeting with Carl Sturges at Parker School to discuss the community's concerns.

We did submit a letter to the Planning Director, reviewing some of the – we receive many comments from the public – reviewing these concerns by neighbors and overall community concerns just because the traffic in this area is like F, some Es, some Ds, in other words it's a critical area in terms of traffic, and in particular because of the proposed 400-seat gymnasium and I believe the proposed increase of students would go up to 550 – I didn't bring my notes because I was really just checking on what was happening – so there was some major concern in terms of traffic, and working with the school and we're really trying to do it. We all support the school and want to work with them, but at the same time this has been one of the areas where there have been a lot of critical issues in terms of accidents and pedestrians. And particularly on that point the CDP sort of, the CDP which went into effect in 2000 (sic), December, focuses really on adequate provisions for pedestrians and bicycles. And so one of the things was like whether there is a pedestrian and bicycle circulation plan. And it's just to me like the pictures that you saw up on the screen are not what the people in this area are concerned, you know; our pictures and I can pass this around, is that same corner loaded with cars all going up and down it. And how, you know, how do we deal with that, and there were a lot of community ideas as to how to do it. And so it was traffic. The gymnasium, which was even questioned whether that should be coming to all of us as a rezoning, since it's an enclosed recreational facility, or whether it should be coming as a plan review. And we weren't really sure about these things, but people raised those questions as to why this was coming just as an amendment to a Special Permit and whether one of the other forms of applications were more appropriate. Again, that's beyond the immediate scope of our review, but those questions were raised.

And the other things included such as protection for the stream, what provisions were being made in terms of the stream that's where the whole planned easement along there for pedestrian and public walk, like, through the trails and greenways would be located.

Another concern just in terms of traffic is that neither the gym nor the adult ed was considered in that traffic study, which were -. If you have a 550-student body, a 400-seat gym, you're probably sometimes going to be working on, you know, 400-plus faculty or whatever. What is that impact when -. And that gym is not as we saw it in the TAIR or TIAR or whatever it is. So this traffic, the stream, this is the neighborhood where everybody comes to walk their dogs, so it's like a big recreational area. And so a lot of people were concerned, well, the traffic is going to go in here, Kapi'olani, drop your students and they are going to go up and up around Hōkū'ula, which is, if you've driven there, there is like a hairpin turn; so what provision is, how do we get traffic in and out without going up on a road that's a single lane – it's used for strollers and bikes and walking as a recreational area. And another one was really that we asked a question in terms of emergency preparedness. And so those are some of the things that we asked and they, in the application they really didn't address those issues, so we felt we couldn't really review it in terms of our review procedure. So we asked we postpone the meeting -.

WATANABE: Okay, but Margaret, my question for you would be, as an active member of the public, the representative, I believe, is Jeff Melrose, yeah, you know, for Parker School -.

WILLE: Yeah.

WATANABE: It seems like they are making arrangements to reach out to the community to address this.

WILLE: Yes.

WATANABE: So are you satisfied with that?

WILLE: Yes, yes.

WATANABE: And then you could update us with the results of that when your conclusions are actually arrived at; I mean at this point it seems like “we have concerns, we are not against the school, but we have concerns,” and it also seems like the applicant is reaching out to you to address your concerns.

WILLE: Yes. And so I just encourage you that you are not voting on it today, and that you will proceed to honor their request to postpone further consideration, and after that time -. We are working very well with Carl Sturges, and trying to do this as a community really brainstorming. And I think this is really a good thing.

WATANABE: Yeah, that’s good, because actually the Department produced no recommendation, so there is absolutely no way that we would -.

WILLE: Okay.

WATANABE: Respond that way. We have, all I have is one letter saying please let us continue.

WILLE: Okay. So I just, I just want to, those are some of our concerns. We may not -. So and we are submitting them to the Planning Director, hoping that she’ll take those into consideration. So I think we are doing really well. And we just say on our committee we’re really expressing to all these applicants that they come to the community first before they submit their application and not having it be, there is like this 30 days with, hurry, get this, they’re trying to meet, oh, my gosh, yes, we could have done that but now we have all our plans done. And I really encourage you all to stress that to applicants to please try to work with the community first, so we don’t, they can proceed ahead and not get into everything is done and in stone.

WATANABE: Okay. So I trust you’re satisfied with the process, no?

WILLE: Yes, I’m very satisfied with the process at this point.

WATANABE: Okay. Would that conclude your testimony?

WILLE: That concludes.

WATANABE: Thank you.

WILLE: So you have a sense, and things are moving along, and thank you very much.

WATANABE: Okay. Fellow Commissioners, do we have any questions of Margaret? No? Okay. Thank you for your testimony, and good luck with your negotiations, yeah?

WILLE: Okay, thank you.

WATANABE: You may be seated. Fellow Commissioners, you know, generally in a situation like this we typically would put it through a vote with the Commissioners in attendance as to whether we would continue; however, I did check with Counsel and Mr. Brillhante has indicated that the Chair does have the prerogative to, you know, continue this meeting. And in light of there not being any other material other than this request, I would, barring any objections from any of you, move to continue this for the next 30 days. Mr. Darrow, now, does that mean we are scheduling this for the next Leeward Planning Commission meeting?

COTTLE: Yes.

WATANABE: Okay, okay. So then let the record show that we are going to continue this to the next Leeward Planning Commission meeting. Any objections? Okay, seeing none, then I think that will be fine. Yes, Mr. Housel.

HOUSEL: I support that, Mr. Chairman.

WATANABE: Thank you.

The discussion ended at 10:21 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Noriko Sauer, Secretary
Leeward Planning Commission