



STAFF REPORT
To The
KELSO HEARING EXAMINER

PRESENTED BY: Steve Langdon, Interim Planning Manager
HEARING DATE: March 31, 2021
APPLICATION NO.: LUA2021-0005
APPLICANT: Kelso School District No. 458
PROPERTY OWNER: Kelso School District No. 458
REQUEST: Conditional Use Permit in accordance with KMC §17.18.040 to allow “Schools.”
LOCATION: Catlin Elementary School, 404 Long Avenue, Kelso, WA (Assessor’s parcel number 23863)
ASSOCIATED CASES: LUA2021-0004 Conditional Use Permit to modernize Huntington Middle School
ZONING DISTRICT: Residential Mixed Density (West Kelso Overlay)
TYPE OF ACTION: Quasi-judicial

BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

On February 8, 2021 Kelso School District No. 458 submitted an application to the City of Kelso for a conditional use permit. (Exhibit A) This conditional use permit (CUP) will allow the district to proceed with a project to temporarily site at the Catlin Elementary School 5 portable classrooms, 2 portable restroom trailers and gravel parking for 60 vehicles. The purpose of the project is to temporarily house Huntington Middle School students for the 2021/2022 school year while the Huntington Middle School is being renovated. The application was declared complete on February 21, 2020.

Temporary site improvements also include adding a curb cut and driveway entrance off of NW 2nd Avenue and Galloway Avenue, and stormwater mitigation. Once the Huntington Middle School modernization project is complete, the temporary classroom portables, increased parking and Catlin School buildings will no longer be utilized for Kindergarten through 12th grade education purposes.

Over the past five years, enrollment at Catlin Elementary School has ranged from 302 to 373 students. During the 2021/2022 school year, the middle school population at Catlin Elementary School is expected to be 580 students.

The site is not on any historic register.

Neighboring land uses:

- South – Motel, restaurant, single-family homes, NW 3rd Avenue.
- East – NW 2nd Ave., Galloway Avenue, mixed density residential
- North – Day care center, church, mixed density residential
- West – Long Avenue, mixed density residential

The Comprehensive Plan classifies the subject property as Higher Density Residential. The parcel is within the Residential Mixed Density (RMD) and West Kelso Overlay zones.

The application is attached as Exhibit A.

SEPA DETERMINATION

An Environmental Checklist for the proposed CUP/building project was reviewed pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act and a determination of non-significance was issued on March 15, 2021. [SEP 21-001 SEPA checklist]

The comment period for the SEPA checklist ends on March 29, 2021. As of this writing, no comments have been received yet. SEPA documents are attached as Exhibit B.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of application and notice for public hearing was published in The Daily News on March 17, 2021. The comment period closes on the hearing date. Notice was mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the site on March 15. A notice was posted on site on March 19, 2021. As of this writing, no comments from the public have been received.

APPLICABLE CODE SECTIONS

17.18.030 Official zoning map.

Subsection A states that “The purpose of the residential mixed density (RMD) zone is to promote diverse housing options in new and existing neighborhoods, high quality design, reinvestment in existing buildings and properties, and the revitalization of existing residential neighborhoods.”

Staff comment: Catlin Elementary School is an existing school in an established mixed-use neighborhood. The school serves nearby residential neighborhoods and rural areas. The project will allow the school site to be used one more year albeit with more students than in the past. With more students, there will be more traffic. But these traffic impacts can be somewhat mitigated and will only be temporary. Staff finds there will be no long term impacts to the neighborhood as a result of this project.

Conditional Use Permit

The purpose of a conditional use permit is to allow uses within a particular zoning classification that may be of service to the area and with minor mitigation, fit within the zone. Topics traditionally addressed

through the conditional use permit process are compatibility with the comprehensive plan, impact to the usability of neighboring properties, noise, light, activity, and traffic.

Kelso Municipal Code does not contain specific criteria for approving a conditional use permit. Instead, staff is using the criteria of site plan approval (KMC 17.10.030) to ensure that basic compatibility is established between this proposal and all other existing development within the City.

The purpose of a site plan review is to help ensure that new development activities do not adversely affect the public health, safety and welfare of residents of Kelso, and that new development activities are compatible with existing patterns of development and the provisions of the Kelso comprehensive plan.

KMC 17.10.030 (C)(1) The project is consistent with the Kelso comprehensive plan and meets the requirements and intent of the Kelso Municipal Code, including the type of land use and the intensity/density of the proposed development.

Staff analysis: Staff finds no conflicts with the comprehensive plan and finds that this proposal will meet the requirements of the Kelso Municipal code.

1. KMC Table 17.18.040, Table of Permitted Uses

Schools are permitted with a Conditional Use permit in the RMD, Residential Mixed Density zoning classification.

2. KMC 17.22.110 Parking

Non-residential use requires parking through analysis.

Staff analysis: The student population is increasing for one school year as a result of this project. The project includes adding temporary gravel parking for 60 vehicles. Typically, the City requires that the parking be paved. Since the parking is only temporary, staff finds it would be an undue hardship to require that it be paved. However, the gravel parking needs to be removed after the temporary use is done. Staff finds that the applicant meets the intent of this section of the code provided the temporary parking is removed once it is no longer needed for school use.

3. KMC 17.22.100 Landscaping

(A)(2) Providing vegetated screening between single-family residential areas and adjoining land uses.

(A)(4) Encouraging the retention of existing vegetation, tree stands and significant trees by incorporating them into the site design.

(G) Perimeter Landscaping Buffer Requirements.

Staff analysis: Preliminary landscaping plans are not traditionally required at this step in the land use process. However, this is a temporary use of a school that is transitioning to non-school use.

Because of the temporary use of the school and its uncertain future, staff believes no additional landscaping is needed.

Staff finds general compliance with this requirement and compliance will be more specifically addressed during the building permit approval process.

(2) The physical location, size, and placement of the development on the site and the location of the proposed uses within the project minimize impacts to any critical resource or floodplain area to the greatest extent possible or are compatible with the character and intended development pattern of the surrounding properties.

Staff analysis: There are no critical resources on the site. The site is in a floodplain area that is protected by a levee system.

(3) The project makes adequate provisions for water supply, storm drainage, sanitary sewage disposal, emergency services, and environmental protection to ensure that the proposed project would not be detrimental to public health and safety.

Staff analysis: Staff finds that as an existing school site all utilities and emergency services are present.

(4) Public access and circulation including non-motorized access, as appropriate, are adequate to and on the site.

Staff analysis: There is adequate public access and circulation for the existing elementary school. However, the student population will substantially increase for one school year as a result of the project. Thus, for that school year, there will be an increase in traffic in the area. The application includes a Transportation Technical Report dated February 11, 2021 (Exhibit C). This report provides detailed information on the impacts of the project on local traffic and circulation.

The report contains two recommendations to help alleviate traffic impacts. They are: the intersection of Long Avenue, Fishers Lane and Columbia Heights Road should be converted to an all-way stop intersection and the Kelso School District and Huntington Middle School should develop a "Transportation Management Plan" for the interim school site. The recommendations are found on Page 21 of the report.

According to the report, at the Long Avenue/Fishers Lane/Columbia Heights Road intersection, west bound movements during the morning peak hour are already at Level of Service (LOS) F. The report states on Page 19 that:

The relatively small increase in trips generated by the interim school at this intersection (less than 8% of total entering traffic) is projected to disproportionately increase delay. However, if the intersection were converted to all-way stop control as described previously, it would operate at LOS C overall will all movements operating at LOS C or better during both peak hours.

Because the northern half of the subject intersection is within Longview city limits and the southern half is within Kelso city limits, the conversion of the subject intersection to an all-way stop control needs the approval of both jurisdictions.

Staff finds compliance with this criterion provided the recommendations in the Transportation Technical Report are implemented. (Staff recognizes that the Kelso School District can only pursue approval of the intersection control change. They need the approval of both cities.)

(5) Adequate setbacks and buffering have been provided. Any reduction to setbacks or buffer widths is the minimum necessary to allow for reasonable economic use of the lot and does not adversely impact the functional value of the critical resource area or adjoining land uses.

Staff analysis: Staff finds compliance with this criterion.

(6) The physical location, size, and placement of proposed structures on the site and the location of proposed uses within the project are compatible with and relate harmoniously to the surrounding area.

Staff analysis: This is an existing school site. The project involves temporarily siting five portable classrooms, two portable restroom trailers and gravel parking for 60 vehicles. The temporary structures will be located in current play area in the back of the school buildings well away from the busy streets of Long Avenue and Fishers Lane. However, there will be more traffic on Galloway and 2nd NW avenues because those streets are needed to access the parking. The primary impacts to the neighboring residents will be for short time periods, twice a day, when school starts and stops. Plus, those impacts will be only for one school year. Staff finds no long-term impacts to the neighborhood as the result of physical location, size, and placement of proposed structures.

(7) The project adequately mitigates impacts identified through the SEPA review process, if required.

Staff analysis: A SEPA process is being conducted for this project. The SEPA comment period will end on March 29, 2021. As of this writing, no comments have been received. If comments are received, they can be addressed by the hearing examiner at the March 31 public hearing or through the building permit application process.

(8) The project would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, or general welfare.

Staff analysis: Staff finds that this project will not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, or general welfare.

17.10.140 Permit Processing.

(B) The City may, in approving an application, impose such conditions as may be required to comply with this title and to protect the public health safety and welfare. These conditions and safeguards include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Measures identified during the environmental review process;
- b. Measures necessary to comply with the provisions of the Kelso comprehensive plan;

- c. Measures necessary to comply with provisions of the Kelso Municipal Code; and/or
- d. Measures necessary to ensure compatibility of the proposed development activity with neighboring land uses, and consistency with the intent and character of the zoning district.

Staff analysis: Staff finds that the proposed application complies with the environmental review, Kelso comprehensive plan, and Kelso municipal code and further that that the proposed development activity is compatible with neighboring land uses and consistent with the intent and character of the zoning district.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of Conditional Use Permit LUA2021-0005 for the project to temporarily house Huntington Middle School students at the Catlin Elementary School, located at 404 Long Avenue, subject to the following conditions.

- A. *When the Catlin Elementary School is no longer needed for the middle school students, the temporary structures, including the gravel parking area, shall be removed and the grounds restored to their original condition.*
- B. *The recommendations in the “Transportation Technical Report for Huntington Middle School Interim Use of Catlin Elementary School Site” dated February 11, 2021 shall be implemented. The recommendations are:*
 - a. *Prior to re-opening, KSD should coordinate with the City of Kelso to determine if the City supports conversion to all-way-stop control at the Long Avenue/Fishers Lane intersection to address the existing poor operation during the morning peak hour. If so, the District could contribute a proportionate share of the costs for that conversion based on school traffic expected to be added.*
 - b. *In addition, KSD and Huntington Middle School should develop a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) that communicates to families and staff expectations and travel routes for the interim school site. The TMP should also include a review of safety elements around the site such as school-zone speed limits and crossing guard locations to determine if any changes are needed.*

In regards to the first recommendation (a.), the Kelso School District (KSD) shall assist the City of Kelso in coordinating with the City of Longview for the conversion of the subject intersection.

In regards to the second recommendation (b.), the KSD shall coordinate with the Kelso City Engineer in the development of the Transportation Management Plan and submit the final TMP to the city engineer for review and approval.

EXHIBITS

- A. Conditional Use Permit Petition with applicant’s narrative including applicant’s site plan

B. SEPA documents

C. Transportation Technical Report for Huntington Middle School Interim Use of Catlin Elementary School Site prepared by Heffron Transportation, Incorporated and dated February 11, 2021.

Staff report date: March 25, 2021