

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Karen Thomas, Case Manager
JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: November 10, 2015
SUBJECT: BZA Case 18929A, 2607 Military Road, NW – St. Johns High School.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

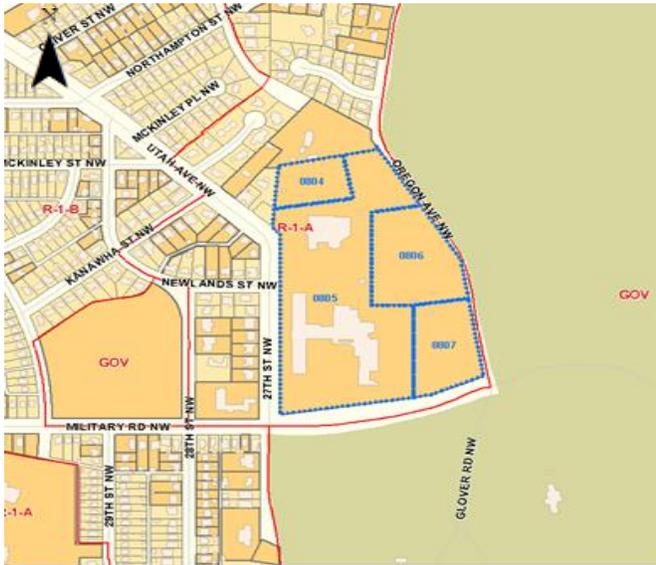
The Office of Planning (OP) **recommends approval** of special exception relief pursuant to §3104 under:

- §206 - to allow the proposed expansion (up to 56,233 square feet) and renovation of the existing gymnasiums at St. John’s High School in three phases; and
- § 411.3 - to allow relocation of existing mechanical rooftop units and addition of three units in separate enclosures (Exhibit 29 -29B2).

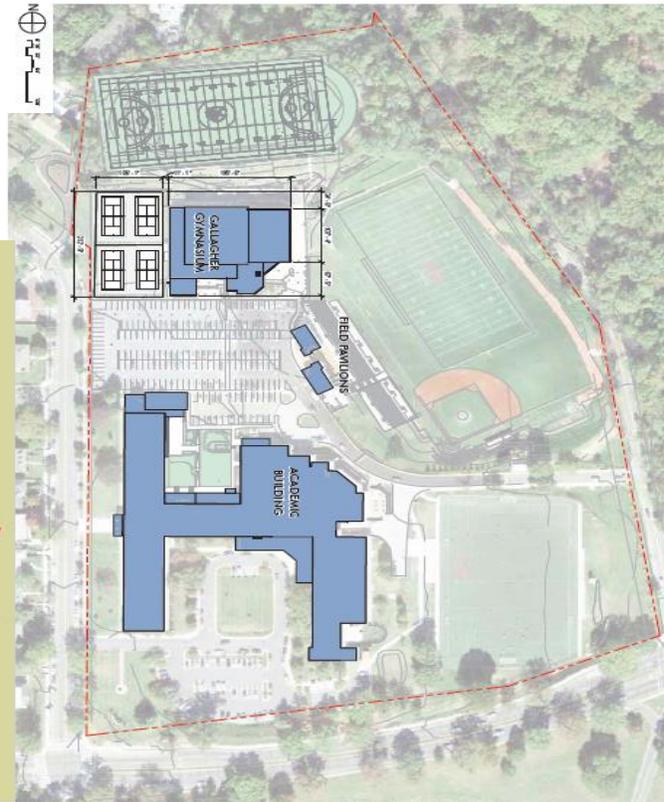
No increases in students or staff members are proposed.

II. LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Address	2607 Military Road, NW
Legal Description	Square 2308, Lots 804 through 807
Ward	3/ANC 3G02
Lot Characteristics	The property is comprised of three large lots of variable topography.
Zoning	The site is zoned R-1-A, which permits private school use as a special exception under § 206.
Existing Development	The 23.8 acre site is improved with a principal school building, accessory buildings, surface parking lots, and athletic fields, permitted in this zone.
Adjacent Properties	The Property abuts 27 th Street to the west, Military Road to the south, and Oregon Avenue to the east.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	The area around the property is characterized by federal park land and residences. Specifically, to the east and south of the property is Rock Creek Park. To the north and west are predominately single family detached dwellings. Across from the school, at the northwest corner of Military Road and 27 th Street, is the Elizabeth R. Shoemaker Home.



Location and Zoning Map



Aerial

III. APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

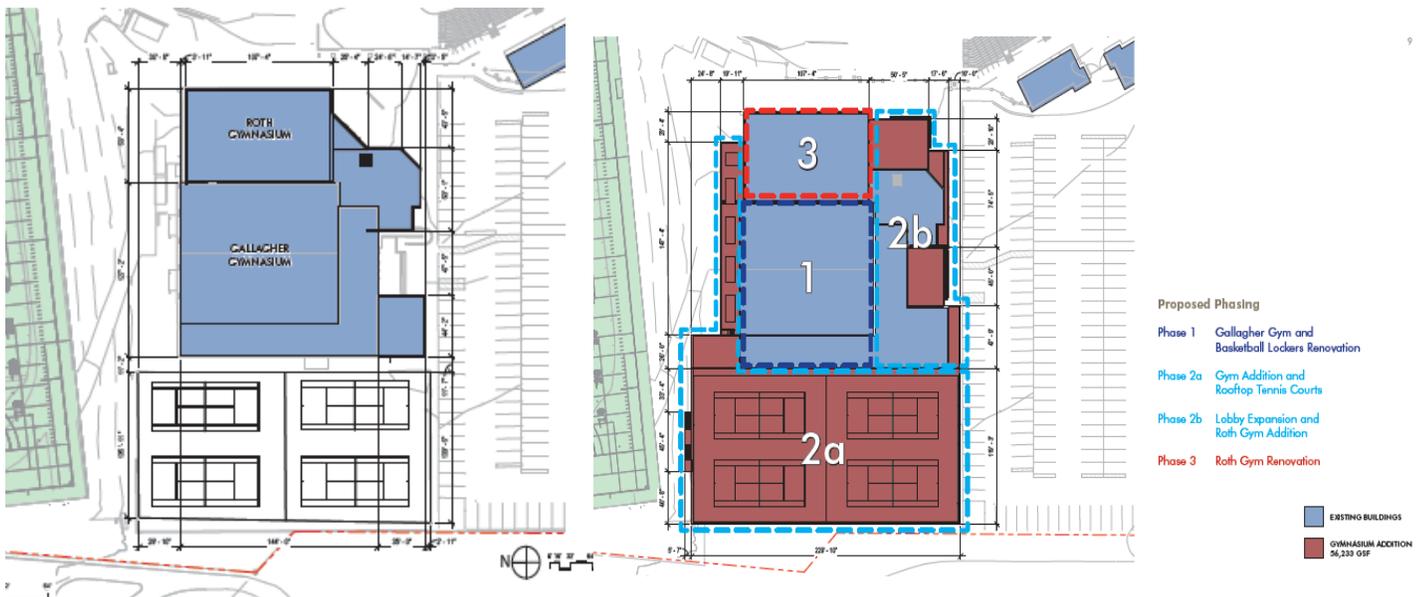
St. John’s College High School (hereinafter, the “Applicant”) proposes an expansion of the existing campus through the renovation and expansion of the existing Roth and Gallagher gymnasiums in three phases as follows:

Phase I *Gallagher and Roth Gymnasium:* Interior renovation of the existing gym areas including upgrading of interior finishes, renovation of locker rooms on the west side of the gym and replacement of the HVAC system;

Phase II *Gallagher Gymnasium:* A one-story addition over the existing tennis courts (west of the gyms), renovation and expansion of the main lobby and support spaces south of the gyms; a two-story addition to the southeast corner of the Roth gym and a new mechanical and electrical equipment room (one-story) north of both gyms. The tennis courts would be relocated to the roof of the one-story addition to the west. A below-grade level would be excavated above the one-story addition to support the wrestling program and would include support and mechanical spaces.

Phase III *Roth Gymnasium*: Interior renovations to the lower level, including repurposed and repositioned spaces to accommodate sports and student athletes. Existing spaces below-grade would be recreated into one large open space for a strength-training center, with associated support spaces.

The project is intended to integrate modern features with the existing gyms, using a combination of metal and glass to maximize natural light for an energy efficient and sustainable building. Extensive green roofs would be included in the renovation to support on-site storm-water management. The applicant should provide the area proposed as green roof for the record.



Existing First Floor Plan (Exhibit #11 Page 8)

Proposed Site Plan (Exhibit #11, Page 9)

The school’s gross floor area, including the academic building and gymnasium facilities would be increased from 193,226 gross square feet¹ to 293,554 square feet. Increases in students, faculty or staff are not proposed.

BACKGROUND

The school has approximately 1,100 students and 125 faculty and staff, and it has been operating in the District since 1846, and at its current location since 1946. The school’s special exception approvals² in prior years were to allow:

- 1991 and 1998 - construction of additions to the school’s gymnasium;
- 2001 - a new science and technology center;
- 2008 - a 3,800 square foot field house containing offices, lockers, and a press box, among other features, such as:
 - bleachers containing approximately 90 seats and a dugout adjacent to the existing baseball field,

¹ Data provided on page 4 of Exhibit #11.

² BZA Order No. 15518 (1991), BZA Order No. 16324 (1998), BZA Order No. 16683 (2001), BZA Order No. 17849 (2008), BZA Order No. 18025 (2010), and BZA Order 18929, March 3, 2015.

- a 5,516 square feet cafeteria;
- a covered colonnade adjacent to 27th Street N.W.;
- an expanded 500 square feet entrance vestibule for the principal building facing 27th Street with a 42-foot tall glass tower element; and
- A layby along the school’s 27th Street side.
- 2010 - Installation of a stealth telecommunication tower by a wireless carrier (CricKet).
- 2015 - 15,650 square feet addition, including a: 2,700 square feet student center walk; 12,300 square feet classroom addition; and 650 square feet boiler storage addition.

IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

R-1-A	Allowed	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Lot Area § 401	7,500 sq. ft. min.	1,036,160 sq. ft.	No Change	Conforms
Lot Occupancy § 403	40% max.	11.5%	14.9%	Conforms
Height § 400.9	90 feet max.	30 ft. 7 ins.	36 ft. 2 ins.	Conforms
Roof Structure § 411.3	One enclosure for multiple roof structures	Multiple mechanical units	Multiple mechanical units	Requested
Parking Spaces § 2101	170 spaces min.	318 spaces	No Change	Conforms

The proposal conforms to the height, massing and yard requirements for the zone. The application was amended as noted in Exhibit 29 (11/03/2015) to include a request for relief from the roof structure requirement of Section 411.3, to allow the relocation of existing mechanical units and addition of three mechanical units, as multiple roof structures, which would not be placed in one enclosure.

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

A. Special Exception Relief pursuant to § 206

- i. The Applicant seeks special exception relief under §§ 206 as follows:

206.1 Use as a public school that does not meet the requirements of chapter 4 of this title or as a private school, but not including a trade school, and residences for teachers and staff of a private school, shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this section.”

This subject private school existed in this location and R-1-A zone district since 1946. The school recently proposed renovations and expansions to some of its 1950’s buildings, including the recently approved expansion to the boiler room, the new classroom and the student walk located interior of the site (Order 18929, March 3, 2015).

206.2 The private school shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions.

In general, the proposed additions and reorganization of the space within the Roth and Gallagher Gymnasiums are intended to better accommodate existing sports and student athletes' activities and satisfy current safety codes. They should not result in any objectionable level of noise or traffic.

Renovations: The renovations would be focused on the interior of both gyms and their support spaces, including office space and locker room upgrades, as well as replacement of the outdated HVAC systems. Current space below the Roth gym would be renovated as a large open space to function as a weight room (Strength and Conditioning) with support space. The changes would facilitate new programming and satisfy contemporary code requirements.

Expansion: The proposed expansion would include an additional 56,233 gross square feet shown in submitted plans (Exhibit #11) as follows:

- A 1-story addition (training center and locker addition) over the existing tennis courts;
- A below-grade level, under the 1-story addition as a wrestling center;
- Renovation and expansion of the lobby area to the south;
- A 2-story addition, south-east of the Roth gymnasium; and
- A 1-story addition at the rear of the gyms as new mechanical space.

The proposed additions, except the addition and expansion of the lobby area, would not be higher than the existing roofline of the Gallagher gymnasium. The lobby would be six feet above the gym and would be a double-height open lobby with an elevator to service the three levels. Yard requirements would be satisfied, and where the rear yard would be reduced from 126 feet to 8 feet along the west property line, new landscaping would be planted to reduce the additions' visibility from public space along 27th Street, N.W. (Perspectives - Exhibit #11 – Pages 34, 35).

The number of students, faculty and staff are not proposed to be increased and the intended renovations should not increase noise or traffic. It is anticipated that any staging for construction would take place on the campus and the school would work with the neighborhood to resolve any construction related issues.

206.3 Ample parking space, but not less than that required in chapter 21 of this title, shall be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile.

According to the Applicant, the school continues to provide 318 off-street parking spaces, far more than the minimum required under the regulations. No new parking spaces are being proposed, nor would any spaces be removed, as part of the application. As neither enrollment nor staff numbers would increase, no additional parking spaces would be required.

ii. Is the proposal in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps?

The proposed additions to the existing gymnasiums would not require relief from the bulk and yard requirements as renovations would be to the interior of the existing building. The Applicant has met the criteria for special exception relief pursuant to § 206 and, as specified under § 3104.1,

granting the relief “will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps.”

iii. Would the proposal appear to tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property?

The proposal would not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, as the one-and two-story additions proposed in Phase II of the project would be negligibly visible from public space and be well below the height of the main academic building on the campus. Phases I and III projects would primarily involve interior renovations, which are not anticipated to impact properties across 27th Street.

B. Special Exception Relief pursuant to § 411.3, 411.11

Section 411.3 requires one enclosure for multiple roof structures or mechanical units. Section 411.11 provides that where it is impracticable...or where it would make full compliance restrictive or unreasonable, ... the Board shall be empowered to approve as a special exception relief under Section 3104 the location, ...number of structures regulated under Sections 411.3 provided the intent and purpose of the Regulations shall not be impaired by the structure and the light and air to adjacent buildings would not be adversely affected.

Since the initial submission, it was discovered that mechanical units would have to be relocated and additional units would be required to adequately provide air conditioning and filtration systems to the renovated buildings. The proposed units would be located near the center of the renovated buildings, satisfy the one-to-one setback from the roof’s edges and would be located approximately 150 feet from the west elevation, along 27th Street, N.W. (Exhibit 29 B, Sheet 17).

i. Is the proposal in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps?

The proposal is in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Regulations, which is to reduce visibility of mechanical units from public space. The provision of one enclosure for the mechanical units proposed in various roof locations would be impractical.

ii. Would the proposal appear to tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property?

The proposed additional units and subsequent relocation of existing units would not have an adverse affect on the use of neighboring property due to obstruction of light and air to properties across 27th Street.

VI. AGENCY COMMENTS

The District Department of Transportation’s (DDOT) comments, including no objection to approval of the requests are included in the record as Exhibit # 25.

VII. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

The applicant provided the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) support of the project at their September 17, 2015 meeting (Exhibit #27 –Tab D (11/03/2015)).

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS / ANC

The ANC Commissioner (ANC 3/4G02) submitted its report to the record (Exhibit #27), dated October 19, 2015, indicating unanimous support of the application.