



**22SN0097 – Chesterfield County
Planning Commission
(J. B. Watkins Elementary School)**

Magisterial District – **Midlothian**

Agent – **Andrew Gillies** (804-748-1050)

CPC Public Hearing – **September 22, 2022**

Time Remaining
100 Days

Case Manager
Summer Morris
(804-751-4151)

Request

Conditional Use

Electronic message center (EMC) sign at J. B. Watkins Elementary School

Staff Recommendation

Approval

The Property

501 Coalfield Road

Site Size

21.04 Acres

**Comprehensive Plan –
Land Use Designation**

Suburban Residential II

Plan Area

County Wide Plan

Figure 1: Aerial of Request Area – Click Image for Link to GIS



Figure 2: Area Map of Request & Land Use Plan Map



Summary of Proposal

The Chesterfield County Planning Commission initiated a request for conditional use for an electronic message center (EMC) sign at J. B. Watkins Elementary School. Conditional use is needed as the school is located in the Midlothian Area West Design District, where EMC signs are prohibited.

Recommendations

STAFF - APPROVAL

Staff recommends approval of this request. The proposed EMC sign will have minimal impact on surrounding properties.

NOTES FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION

1. Conditions may be imposed.
2. Conditions are included with this report.
3. A conceptual plan has been submitted by the applicant.

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Planning

Comprehensive Plan – Land Use Plan Designation

The **Comprehensive Plan** designates the Property for Suburban Residential II, which suggests the Property is appropriate for residential development at a maximum density of 2.0 to 4.0 dwellings per acre.

Proposal

An electronic message center (EMC) sign is proposed to be incorporated into an existing freestanding sign identifying J. B. Watkins Elementary School. The EMC sign will replace the changeable copy portion of the existing monument sign. The sign will comply with Ordinance requirements for a freestanding sign relative to setbacks (a minimum of five (5) feet from right-of-way), sign area (maximum area of sixteen (16) square feet), and the operation of the EMC component ([Condition 2](#)).

EMC - Sign Component

Approval of conditional use is necessary because the school is located within Midlothian Area West, as shown below in Figure 3, where EMCs are specifically prohibited by the zoning ordinance.



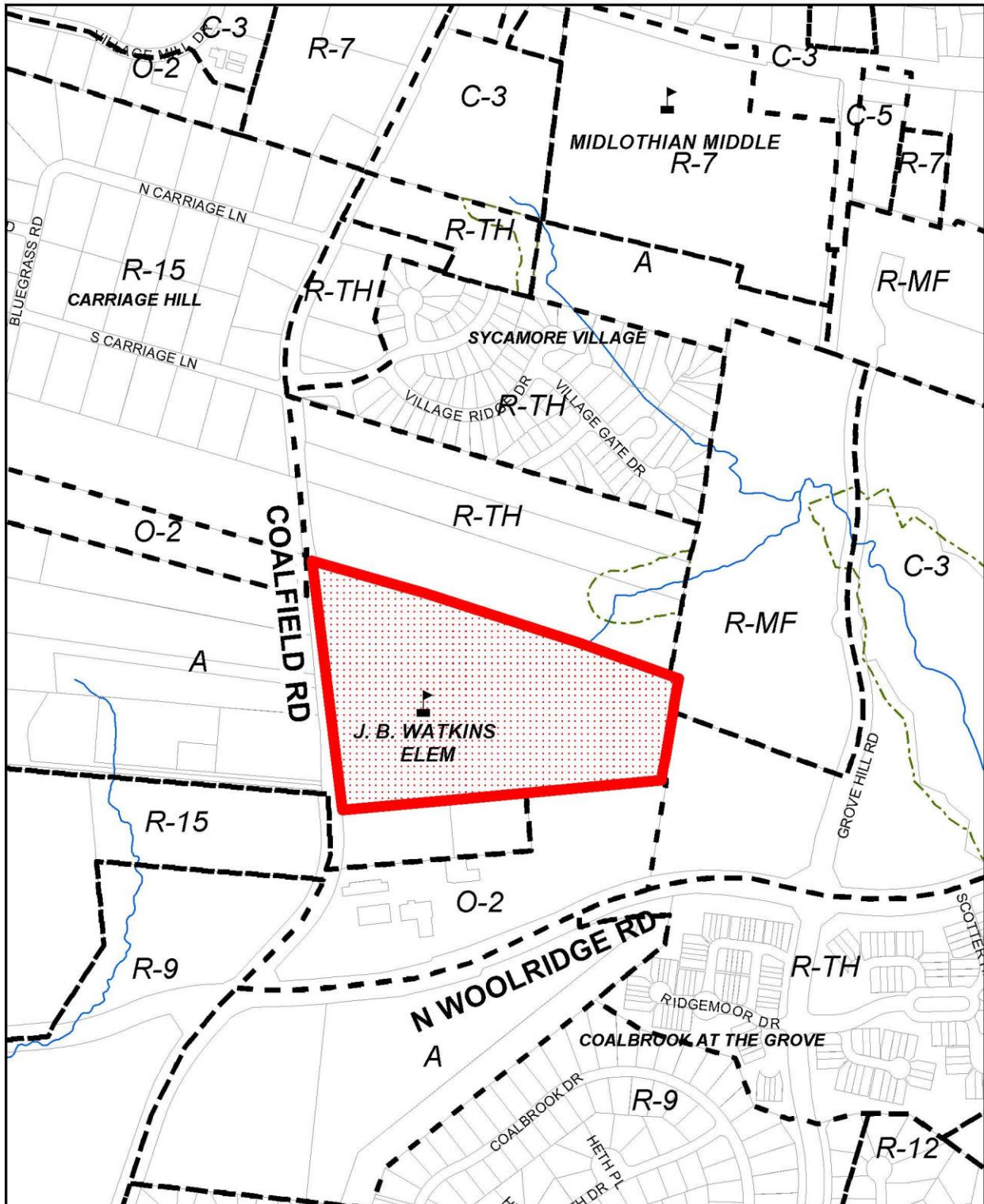
Figure 3: Map of the Midlothian Area West Geography

The EMC component of the sign will be limited by the restrictions outlined in [Condition 2](#). These restrictions include: a one (1) minute interval for copy change, limitations on copy movement, minimum resolution for sign images, prohibition of display coordinated messages, requirement of a photocell to adjust brightness based on ambient conditions, and limitations on sign brightness above ambient light.

Findings

While the proposed freestanding sign in Midlothian Area West, an area where EMC signs are prohibited, will contain an EMC component, the sign will help better identify Watkins Elementary School and facilitate communication about relevant information and events at the school to the community. The EMC component of the sign is replacing the changeable copy portion of the existing sign which, in tandem with the conditions for this request, will minimize the visual impact of the encroachment. Staff anticipates that the proposed EMC sign will have minimal impacts on area development.

Current Zoning Map



Map 1: Subject Property

Case #: 22SN0097

Acreage: 21.04


Address: 501 COALFIELD ROAD

GPIN: 729-705-0717

600 300 0 600

 Feet



 Resource Protection Area

 Streams

Supplemental Analysis

Community Enhancement

No comment on this request.

Environmental Engineering

No comment on this request.

Fire & Emergency Medical Services

Service Area

The Midlothian Fire Station, Company Number 5

Additional Information

This request will have minimal impacts on Fire & Emergency Medical Services.

Police

Division	Beat	District
Swift Creek	16	Midlothian

Additional Information

This request is anticipated to have minimal impacts on Police.

Transportation - County Department of Transportation

This request will have no impact on the transportation network.

Transportation - Virginia Department of Transportation

The applicant is requesting a conditional use for an EMC sign. The applicant will need to comply with any applicable State Outdoor Advertising laws and regulations.

Utilities – Water and Wastewater

The proposed location of the EMC sign for Watkins Elementary School will not conflict with any existing public water and wastewater lines.

The Utilities Department supports this request.

Community Engagement & Public Hearings

Community Meetings

A virtual community meeting was held on August 30, 2022. Four (4) members of the public were in attendance.

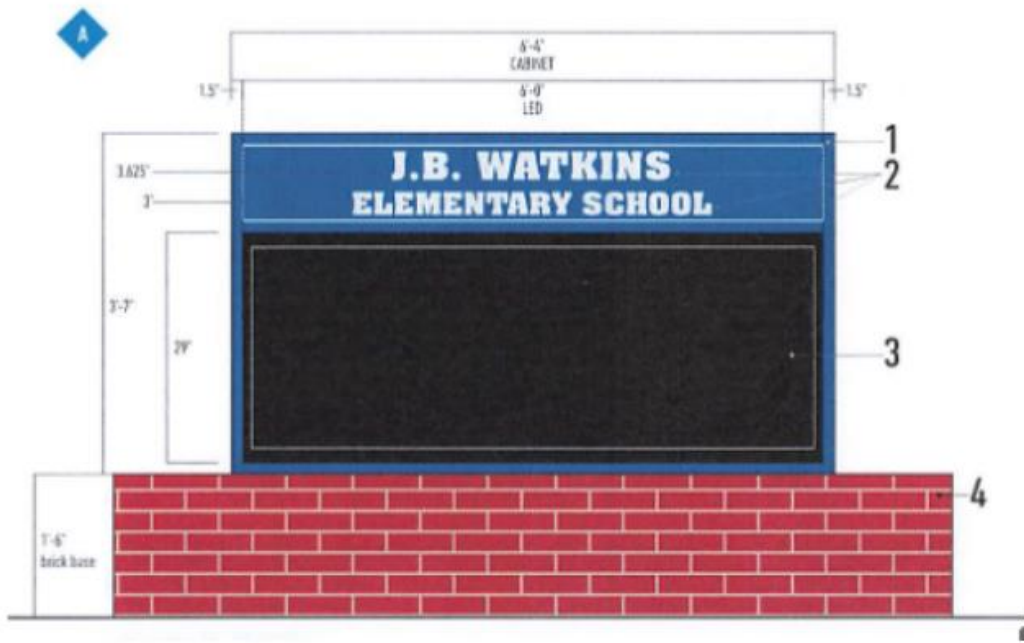
8/30/2022 – Discussion Topics:

1. Time of the day the sign will be on
2. Sign size
3. Location of the sign
4. Placement of EMC component in the sign

Conditions

1. Sign Design and Location. The sign shall be designed as generally shown on Exhibit A. (P)
2. EMC Component. The EMC component of the freestanding sign shall comply with the following standards:
 - a. Excluding copy that includes only current time of day or outdoor temperature, the interval of copy change for the EMC is limited to one (1) minute.
 - b. Excluding copy that includes only current time of day, date, or outdoor temperature, copy shall change simultaneously.
 - c. Copy does not move or give the illusion of movement, such as blink, scroll, flash, spin, fly in/out, scintillate or similar effects, however, copy may fade as transition to next copy.
 - d. Copy is limited to a still image or lines of text.
 - e. Displays shall be high resolution having no larger than twelve (12) millimeter pixel pitch.
 - f. Sign defaults to blank copy if there is a malfunction in device.
 - g. Sign does not display coordinated messages which are intended to be continued on opposite sign face or other signs on-site or off-site.
 - h. A photocell or other device is used that automatically adjusts brightness according to ambient conditions.
 - i. Brightness does not exceed 0.3 foot candles above ambient light as measured at a distance in feet that is the square root of the sign area in square feet multiplied by 100. (P)

Concept Plan – Exhibit A



Case Contacts

Applicant

- **Applicant's Agent:**
Andrew Gillies (804-748-1050)
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- **Applicant's Contact:**
Melissa Newman (804-312-6962)
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District Planning Commissioner

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Staff

- **Planning Department Case Manager:** Summer Morris (804-751-4151) morrissu@chesterfield.gov
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- **Fire & Emergency Medical Services:** Anthony Batten (804-717-6167) battena@chesterfield.gov
- **Police:** Jim Eicher (804-318-8693) eicherj@chesterfield.gov
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