

MANDATORY REFERRAL-REPORT NO. 05-19
Proposed Addition to North Mecklenburg High School Campus

PROJECT PROPOSAL AND LOCATION:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools proposes to acquire 30 acres of property adjoining the North Mecklenburg High School campus in the Town of Huntersville. Acquisition is proposed to expand North Mecklenburg High School's parking lots, athletic fields, on-site vehicle stacking and to provide longer term space for additional buildings. The tax parcel identification numbers of these parcels located on Old Statesville Road and Alexanderana Road are 017-051-06, 10, 11, 14, 15 & 17, and consist of 30 acres.

Parcel 017-051-15 (12.9 acres) is owned by the City of Charlotte and is improved with a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities water tower. A significant component of this proposal would be to develop an operating agreement between the City and CMS that would allow continued rights of access for the purpose of maintenance and potential replacement of the water tower.

The properties currently are largely vacant land, but also contain the water tower and several homes. They carry an "NR" – Neighborhood Residential – zoning classification in the Huntersville Zoning Ordinance.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

North Mecklenburg High School is the largest school in the district with a current (2005-06) enrollment of more than 2,900 students. Utilization at the school has climbed to 192% without its 59 mobile classrooms. In order to provide a seat for every student attending the school, CMS has allotted 59 mobile classrooms to North Mecklenburg High School for the 2005-06 school year.

The severe overcrowding at North Mecklenburg High School is a result of a population growth that has occurred in northern Mecklenburg County. The three northern towns (from which North Mecklenburg largely draws its students) have seen recent significant population growth that is projected to continue.

The CMS *Long-Range School Facilities Master Plan (Interim Report – 2005)* identifies the need for 320 additional seats as part of a baseline renovation at North Mecklenburg High. The expansion of North Mecklenburg would begin to relieve the severe overcrowding that is occurring at the school until CMS can open a new high school in the area (scheduled for Mallard Creek Park in 2007). The November, 2005 bond referendum includes a 16-classroom addition at North Mecklenburg. The additional acreage can also be used to accommodate ancillary school functions (e.g. athletic fields, vehicle circulation, parking).

Additionally, campus expansion would allow the Town of Huntersville to offer recreational programs at facilities that could be expanded as a result of the proposed transaction.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED PUBLIC POLICIES:

North Mecklenburg is an older established school site with the largest student population within CMS (as well as the state). The site consists of 53.8 acres which does not meet the 60 acre high school site state guideline. The additional land is needed to accommodate the addition prescribed in the *Long-Range School Facilities Master Plan (Interim Report – 2005)*.

CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED LAND USE PLANS:

The properties have a NR (Neighborhood Residential) zoning classification, according to the Huntersville Zoning Ordinance, which permits mixed residential development under prescribed conditions. Huntersville's Planning staff has stated that the intended use is consistent with land use plans and that they are in support of the proposed transaction.

PROJECT IMPACT:

The additional acreage would physically connect the North Mecklenburg High School and Blythe Elementary School campuses and would provide better circulation between and around the two schools. Current traffic congestion along Old Statesville Road and Alexanderana Road during arrival and dismissal times would be eased with reconfiguration of entrances and exists to the schools' campuses, that could be accomplished with the addition of the adjoining property. Nearby Alexander Middle School's traffic congestion would also be eased.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROJECTS:

Charlotte Area Transit System has recommended a north corridor commuter station location on proposed Hambright Road Extension, east of the school campuses. The station will be the centerpiece of a mixed-use transit oriented development site. A proposed transit oriented development is currently undergoing development review (including a rezoning petition) by the Town of Huntersville. The proposed development would involve the relocation of the Norfolk Southern tracks further east (away from NC115 and the schools) as well as the extension of Hambright Road eastward.

Nearby major road improvements are anticipated in the next several years with the building of the northern leg of the I-485

outer belt.

ESTIMATED PROJECT COMPLETION DATE:

Funding for the land purchase would be with 1999 bond money, so could be completed fairly quickly. The additional parking spaces would be ready for use at the end of 2005. A classroom addition is included as part of the 2005 bond referendum, and would be expected to be completed in 2009-10.

JOINT USE TASK FORCE REVIEW COMMENTS:

The Joint Use Task Force discussed the matter at their November 2, 2005 meeting, and it was pointed out that current shared use agreements with Huntersville's Park & recreation could be expanded with an expanded campus. While it is proposed that the City property containing the water tower would be conveyed to CMS, the water tower would remain under an easement agreement or license, creating a joint use of sorts.

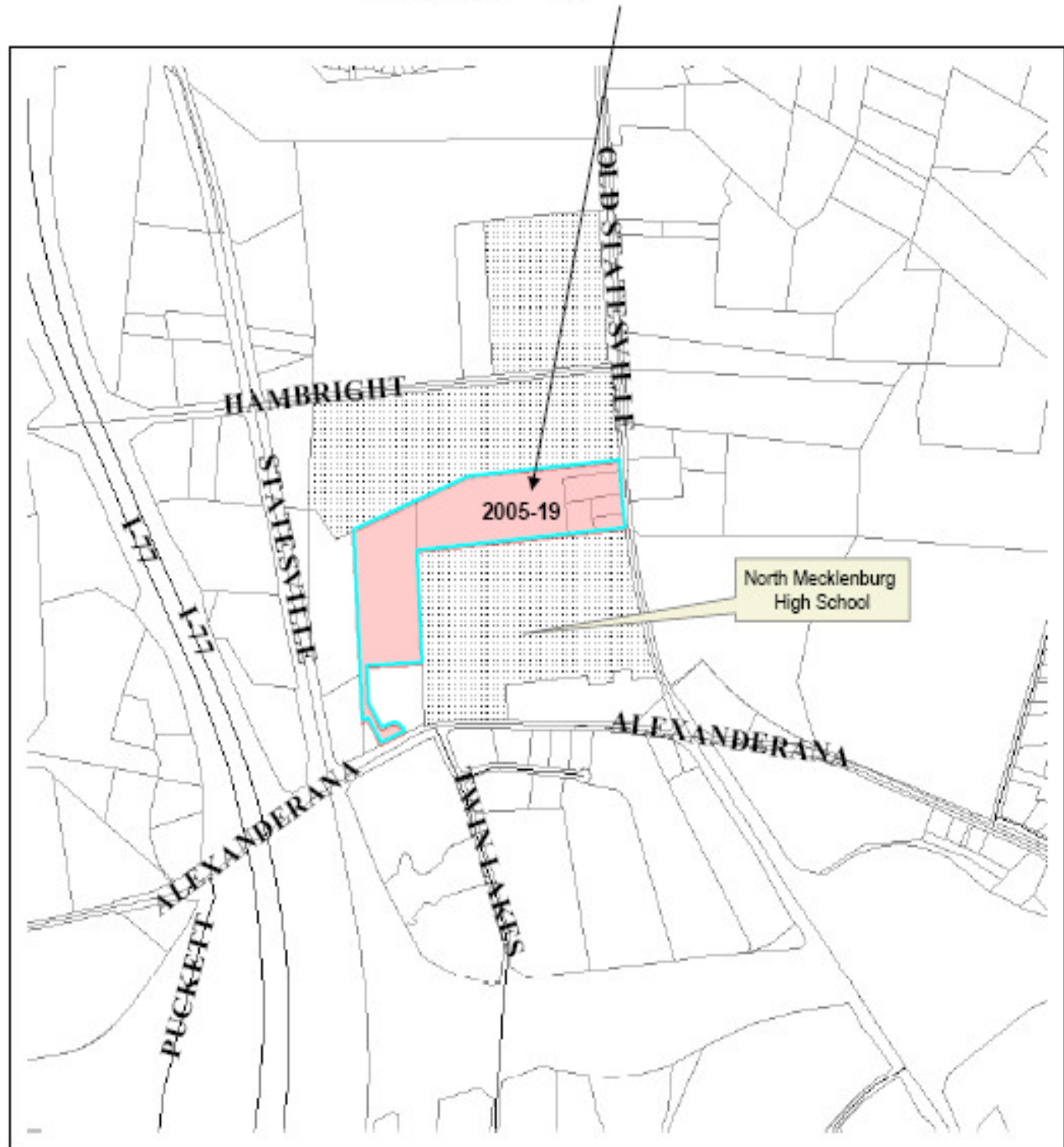
CMPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Planning staff recommends approval of the acquisition of this property to serve as campus expansions for the two schools.



CMPC PLANNING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

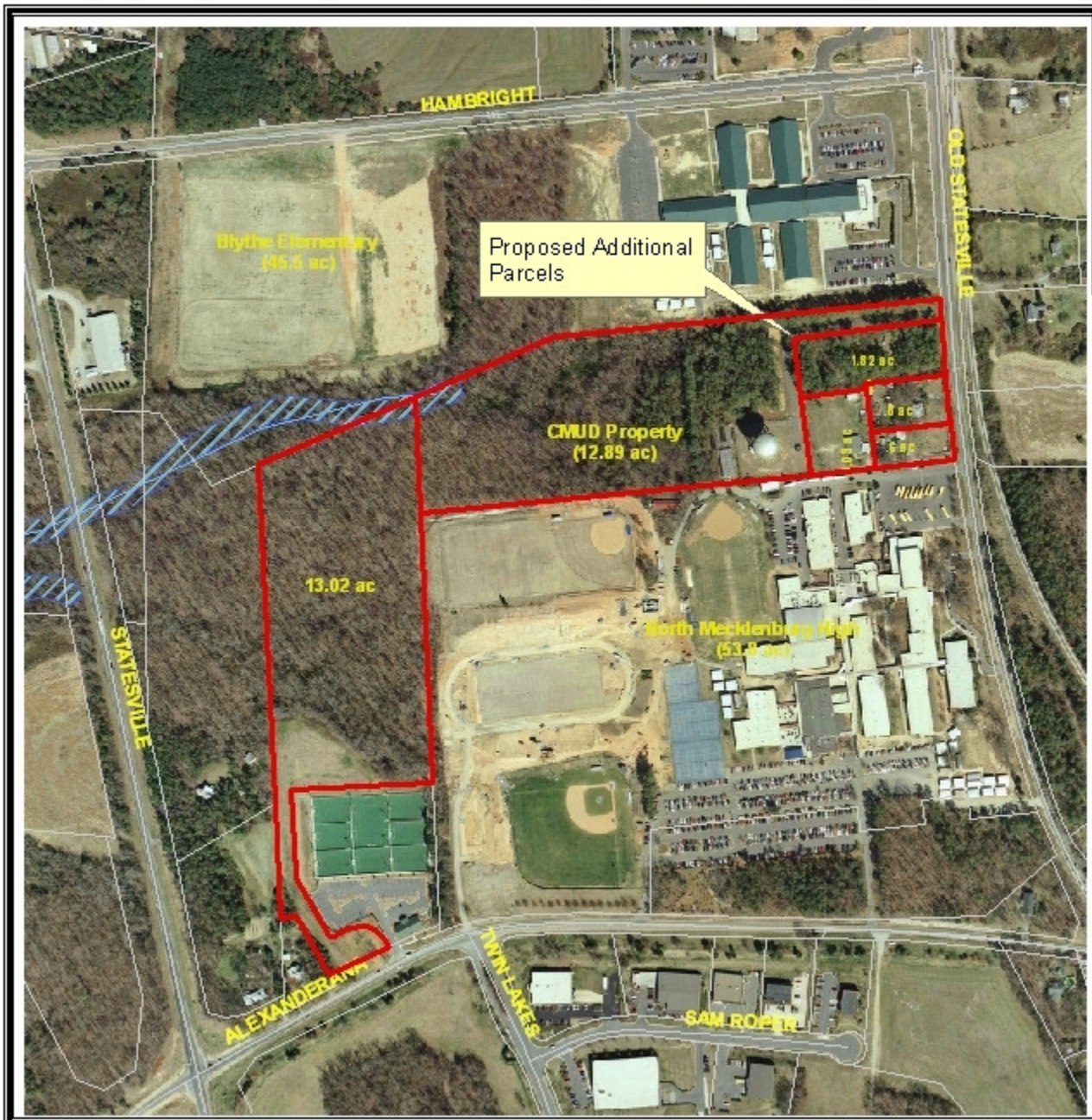
At their November 15, 2005 meeting the Planning Committee recommended approval by a 5-0 vote.

MR 05-19



Legend

-  Mandatory Referral
-  CMS School



PRO
NORT

Size:
Region
Zoning
Parcel
Owner
Location
School
Notes

2004 Aerial