

**PLAN COMMISSION
VILLAGE OF DEERFIELD
April 23, 2026
Minutes**

The Plan Commission of the Village of Deerfield called to order a meeting at 7:30 P.M. on April 23, 2026, at Deerfield Village Hall.

Present were: Al Bromberg, Chair
Lisa Crist
Sara Lubezny
David Rauen
Blake Schulman
Ken Stolman

Absent was: Bill Keefe

Also Present: Jeff Ryckaert, Principal Planner
Dan Nakahara, Planner II
Justin Keenan, Assistant Village Manager
Ben Schuster, Village Attorney

Public Comment on a Non-Agenda Item

There were no comments from the public on a non-agenda item.

WORKSHOP MEETING

- 1) Prefiling Conference on the Request for a Special Use Amendment to Permit the establishment of a New School Building and Other Site Improvements for Deerfield School District 109 at Walden Elementary School at 630 Essex Court in the P-1 Public Lands District – Deerfield School District 109 and Deerfield Park District

Those who wish to speak on this petition were sworn in. Chair Bromberg explained the purpose of a prefiling conference is to provide the petitioner with comments and concerns before a Public Hearing. The Plan Commission will neither vote nor make any decisions this evening.

Commissioner Schulman reported he lives just north of Walden Park but stated that he can be impartial and feels that it is unnecessary for him to recuse himself from this petition and the zoning process.

Cathy Kedjidjian, Chief Communications Officer with District 109 and Director of Buildings and Grounds, Tim Ryan, were present. They have held a numerous public engagement meetings to listen to the community and get feedback on the Walden School redevelopment project. They are looking forward to working together and collaborating on this project.

Jeff Huff, Architect, explained the proposed replacement school for the currently undersized Walden Elementary School. He explained they have held meetings with the entire Walden community, including those directly around the Walden school property. He noted that they have also held 1:1 Zoom meetings to discuss the project and receive feedback. Mr. Huff believes the only area to build a new school is on the northeast portion of the property while

keeping the existing building. Mr. Huff noted that the proposed new building tucks around closely to the existing building pulling it as far from the north and west property lines as possible. The second floor of the building was stepped back to also maximize the distance from the adjacent neighbors.

Claudia Welp, Cage Engineering discussed the interim condition plan and commented that their team is working to ensure both schools (existing and proposed) will work operationally and provide safe conditions during the time that both buildings will be in use on the property at the same time. Ms. Welp explained that the drop-off locations will not change and the access to the buildings were shown. She noted that the stormwater management currently has a lot of problems which they are looking to improve with underground stormwater basins.

Ms. Welp stated that once the original school building comes down, there will be a lot more room to drop-off students onsite and the drop-off will remain on the east side of the property. She commented that the parking lot has been expanded to meet Village code for the required parking while also adding a bus loop on the west side of the property that will exit to the south. There are additional sidewalks and play areas on the east side of the building as well as two sport fields. The west side of the property has a larger path for emergency use. There are also additional stormwater facilities on the final plan and a second stormwater basin will be installed on the southeast corner of the site. No stormwater will drain from the site to the nearest properties.

The petitioner is working with the traffic consultant, TYLin on the site plan. Kelly Conley, TYLin, is in process of conducting a traffic impact study. Ms. Conley stated that the site will continue to operate with a one-way circulation pattern and there will be an increase in the number of onsite parking spaces.

Ch. Bromberg noted there were some recommendations in the traffic analysis, including considerations for safety during construction, in the packet. Ms. Conley explained some of the recommendations are for traffic management and are not shown on the site plan.

Commissioner Lubezny noticed the packet did not analyze Ambleside Drive. Ms. Conley noted they are working with Cage Engineering on the site's pedestrian circulation plan. The pedestrian path will remain open during construction. Ms. Welp explained the pathways will be installed early in the construction process to keep the pedestrian circulation open.

Commissioner Schulman asked how the pedestrian path would remain open. Ms. Welp explained that their team is still working out the logistics keeping the path open during construction. The construction areas will be fenced off. Mr. Huff explained the construction team is working with the schools and the safety of students and community is a primary focus.

Commissioner Stolman asked about access from Essex Court off of Warrington Road. Ms. Welp explained one way construction is planned. Her team is putting together engineering sets for both the interim and final plans.

Mr. Huff explained they are proposing a 2-story building with first floor height just over 16 feet, and the top of the second floor at 34 feet and 38 feet with the screening. The screened area will be about 8 feet higher than the existing building while other areas will only be a couple feet higher. Some elevations are still being worked on so the building heights may be slightly lower. There is also a stairwell, which is the highest point of the building, to get onto the roof for

maintenance. The stairwell on the roof is in the front of the building and far from the adjacent neighbors. The second story will be set back from the north and west property lines, which are closest to the neighbors. On the west of the main entry will be classrooms. The cafeteria, gyms, band and art rooms will also be on the west end, far from the neighbors, to minimize noise. The library and stem labs will be on the second level and there will be a screened area where learning activities can occur. The shared spaces and playgrounds will be located away from neighbors.

Commissioner Lubezny asked if they are proposing two stories due to the lack of space. Mr. Huff explained the existing building is slightly over 57,000 square feet which is about 20,000-25,000 square feet smaller than other schools in the district. The proposed 82,000 square foot building would have approximately 60,000 square feet on the first level and approximately 20,000 square feet on the second floor. If the building were one level at 82,000 square feet, the play area and parking would be reduced. Mr. Huff noted the play area is important for the Park District.

Ch. Bromberg explained the applicants will need to provide a number of things before the Public Hearing including the amount of lot coverage, signage, lighting, the landscape plan (especially the screening to the surrounding neighbors). Ch. Bromberg added the Commission will also need information on how bicycles will be handled and refuse receptacles stored.

Ms. Welp explained they are proposing a retaining wall on north side of the site, around 2 feet at largest point and decreasing to zero at east and west ends. This area represents the lowest part of the site and is a natural, depressed area. The goal of this low area is to significantly reduce the water and allow a larger detention area on the north side. They are trying to keep the area as flat as possible, to provide more play space. They propose installing a fence with landscape on both sides as well as a fence.

Ch. Bromberg questioned whether the stormwater control would be sufficient during the construction to ensure the neighbor's properties do not flood. Ms. Welp explained there is currently no stormwater management on the property. Ch. Bromberg added the Commission will also need information on how recess will be handled during construction. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they have committed to ensure a playground will be available during construction and are working on that plan and will either repurpose current playground equipment elsewhere or purchase the new equipment. Commissioner Schulman asked about Phase 1. Ms. Welp explained they are currently working on staging the playground and would have more information for the public hearing.

Commissioner Stolman would like to see a construction schedule for everything including the demolition while students are attending school. He urged the applicants to consider the comments and conversations with the neighbors. Ms. Welp explained they have received the public comment and will cater the next presentation to address the public concerns. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they started gathering feedback from the community in September of 2025 and convened a task force and steering committee. The School District has held information sessions with the community to get feedback on what the task force vetted and came up with the 2 plus 2 plan to renovate two schools and build two schools. She noted there was some discussion about putting Walden back on their original location as well as a swing location at Holy Cross. Ms. Kedjidjian explained there are a lot of requirements from the Regional Board of Education (ROE) including security and air quality standards that would have to be met. The School District did their due diligence and brought their construction team and owners

representatives together and asked what it would cost to provide a temporary school. The best case to provide a temporary school was approximately \$10 million but more likely be more than \$20 million for a temporary site they would not use again. After the community engagement in the fall, the School District held public opinion polls in November 2025. One important piece was that the original 2+2 proposal cost of \$121 million was too high. The proposal on the March 17th ballot reduced the tax impact by 33 percent. A discussion on the viability and decision making of having a swing site ensued. Ch. Bromberg summarized that the school district considered swing sites and found they were not sufficient or cost too high to make swing sites sufficient options; therefore, they were not a viable option. In addition, building the swing sites would add a year onto the construction timeline and each year would cost an additional \$9 million.

Commissioner Crist noted there was discussion that Kipling students would move into the existing Walden building once the new Walden School building was completed. Ms. Kedjidjian confirmed that after the Spring of 2027 when students leave school for the summer heavy construction work will begin (digging, footings etc.) and when the Walden students come back in August 2027, they will watch their school being built. In fall of 2028, Walden students will move into the new building and Kipling students will move to the current Walden school building. Ms. Crist noted the construction schedule for the new school would be 15 months. Mr. Huff explained the project will begin in Spring of 2027 and go the full year. In summer of 2028, the punch list will be finalized. As it get closer to the beginning of the school year, furniture will be moved in and teachers will begin occupying their spaces. Work will start on the renovations at Kipling over the summer. Students would move into both Walden schools. Beginning of 2029, Kipling students will move into the newly renovated Kipling building. Ch. Bromberg noted that leaving out that both schools buildings will be operational for a school year is a large omission from the submitted materials and creates the need for a lot more information before the public hearing as there will now be two sets of students, parents and busses on the site. The Commission will need to see additional traffic information for these conditions.

Commissioner Crist would like to know how construction traffic will be routed, the hours of construction, weekend hours, and whether there will be a construction bonus. She also questioned why the building exterior is so articulated on the north side. Mr. Huff explained everything they did from a design standpoint was dictated by programmatic needs of the school. They are creating widened corridors to be used as teaming spaces for speech pathologists and other clinical specialists to work with students. Students requiring special help will be able to stay close to their classrooms. Currently, the clinical specialists are working with students in hallways or former storage rooms. There will be tailored spaces for special services. Mr. Huff explained his firm only works on schools and they try to avoid putting fancy into the building. There may be some more expensive pieces, but they are in the right spots.

Commissioner Crist asked about the rationale for the courtyards. Mr. Huff explained courtyards in schools serve one purpose--to get natural light into classrooms. He noted they are looking into making the courtyard a year-round space. There is a need for mobility and older schools do not have that. There is an opportunity to support all students and be inclusive to everyone. Mr. Huff noted the expensive part of the courtyard is the exterior walls.

Commissioner Rauen would like to ensure the petitioner is meeting the seven standards for a Special Use. He would also like to know more about the swing site and the impact on neighboring real estate. He believes it would be interesting to see a clear analysis of the swing site alternatives and would like to know what professionals were in the working group and how

they looked at the alternatives to come to this plan conclusion. Commissioner Rauen noted there has been a lot of public comment about the impact on real estate values and believes the property values needs to be addressed. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they held a session with realtors but do not have a definitive answer how the proposed school will affect property values. She will look to other communities and will provide anecdotal information. Schools are a big draw to the community and the impact on taxes should also be considered. Commissioner Rauen asked about the sight lines. He believes the intensity during construction and having two schools on the site at one time needs to be addressed. Ch. Bromberg explained when two schools are in session at Walden, the construction will be at Kipling. The demolition of the existing Walden School would not start until the Kipling students are back at Kipling. Ms. Kedjidjian noted Kipling students will have free bus transportation to and from the current Walden school. It will be challenging for all school staff and they are working on shuttle and parking plans for school staff. She also noted that there is an intergovernmental agreement with the Park District that requires the school district to allow them to use the schools for summer camps and before and after school care.

Commissioner Schulman asked about the hours of construction. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they would follow the Deerfield codes and ordinances. Mr. Huff added there would be no construction traffic or deliveries during school drop-off or pick-up. The contractors would be onsite to start work at 7:00 am and would park on the gravel area. There will be no construction parking or equipment outside the construction area.

Commissioner Schulman asked about the air quality during construction. The excavation will be the dustiest part during construction and they will utilize water and dust control measures to help mitigate air quality. During the masonry work, they do not anticipate a lot of air quality issues.

Commissioner Schulman requested additional information on the economics of the swing site. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they spoke with the real estate company and did not go further after receiving the rent estimates from the owner's representative and the real estate agent the school was working with.

Commissioner Schulman questioned whether the shape of the building drives up costs. Mr. Huff explained the building shape is not adding to the cost. A blank slate would still add cost because of the needs of the schools. He explained they are trying to provide schools that can support what learning looks like today.

Commissioner Schulman asked about drainage. Ms. Welp explained the site is currently split around the property mid-point so the property will need detention on the north and south sides of the property. Commissioner Schulman asked why the petitioner is getting rid of the existing swale. Mr. Schuster explained there were no stormwater regulations in the 1940s and 1950s. When you build today, there are a lot of regulations requiring stormwater management. Under the current building standards, any construction projects, aside from single-family homes, must improve the stormwater conditions. The proposed stormwater management will be an improvement over what is existing.

Commissioner Lubezny noted tonight's submission did not mention the swing site and how it will be handled. She asked the applicants to make sure they are meeting the Special Use criteria. Commissioner Lubezny asked how having two buildings in operation on the same site would affect the drainage on the property. One of the criteria for a Special Use is to ensure the lot is of sufficient size. She questioned if there is enough space for two buildings. She also asked

about the two schools, and whether parking and access would affect the neighborhood. Commissioner Lubezny asked for the plan to address the drainage issues.

Commissioner Stolman was led to believe existing Walden School building was at the critical end of its functional life, and now the School District is proposing having two schools operating on the site and the existing Walden School building will be kept open another year to handle the students from Kipling. He asked about the risk of keeping the existing Walden School building open another year. Mr. Ryan explained they would keep Walden open another year and would have to react if necessary, which is what they currently do.

Commissioner Stolman asked how far along construction would be when school starts in August, 2027. The petitioner's construction manager explained that they would enclose the building between August and December so the building is water-tight. The digging and laying of steel would be completed before school begins in August, 2027.

Commissioner Rauhen asked about the specific challenges encountered when they discussed relocating the Walden school to Holy Cross. Ms. Kedjidjian explained private schools are not required to meet the same standards as public schools. The Holy Cross school building would have to be completely upgraded to meet the standards. Mr. Huff will provide more detail on those studies, but noted Holy Cross did not meet the ROE Codes without investing a significant amount of money into the building. It also does not meet ADA standards. Mr. Schuster added there are a number of standards that have to be met for public schools. Commissioner Schulman suggested temporary use for public schools are a little laxer, but the safety concerns must be met. Ms. Kedjidjian explained in addition to the ROE Codes, there are IT standards that would need to be met as well.

Commissioner Schulman believes the parking improvements look nice and there are crosswalks for school access but not for park access. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they would be willing to meet the recommendations of three crossing guards for drop-off and pickup hours. Commissioner Schulman asked the petitioner to take into consideration that the younger kid's playground is to the south.

Commissioner Schulman questioned if there are contingencies built-in and what would happen if construction takes longer. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they are discussing it and planning for the worst. Mr. Huff explained if something is delayed, they would work with the school district to shift the start dates, but do not anticipate that. He noted that their timeline is conservative.

Commissioner Schulman noted the School District and Park District would need to guarantee the areas surrounding the school perimeter would not be improved. Ms. Kedjidjian explained the property around the school is Park District property. Laura McCarty, Executive Director of the Deerfield Park District, explained they would have to appear before the Plan Commission to discuss any amenities or any changes to their property and right now there are no plans for any changes.

Commissioner Schulman noted safety is a huge concern. He questioned if there would be fencing installed to protect students, staff and the public. They need to figure out access points, restrictions for trucks, pedestrians, cars, and busses, how recess will occur, public access to the fields during Phase 1, drainage, air quality, the walking paths and how far each pathway would be from construction and how emergency vehicles access the site.

Ch. Bromberg reiterated the Commission would not make any decisions tonight and opened the meeting for public comment.

Carrie Kirchen lives to the north on Ambleside Drive. She is in favor of the schools but concerned about the Special Use, drainage while two schools are operating on the site, having a school on a construction site, the amount of pervious surface being taken away, the effect on the neighborhood, taking away the only park in the area and replacing it with a large building. Ms. Kirchen expressed concern about the impact on the neighborhood and access for emergency vehicles.

Rob Winn lives on Ambleside Drive, north of the site. He explained the topography of the site is one of the biggest challenges. There is an embankment from the north side to the rear of their yards. He questioned how the embankment would be graded. There is a lot of work regarding topography and grading and there does not seem to be a lot of thought put into it. The north elevation of the building is articulated, but it is not clear how the setbacks will work. The roof plan is not shown. Mr. Winn would like more information on the rooftop units and would like clarity on the noise. He noted the fence and retaining wall are in a straight line and would prefer something more organic with additional landscaping added and believes that would be a benefit for everyone.

Jason Wright lives on west side of Ambleside Drive. He is concerned about how the construction will impact students, security, and lack of green space. He expressed concern on how the large workforce would impact the safety and mental health of the students. Mr. Wright asked about the safety plans. He believes everyone should be shocked with the construction being so close to neighboring houses, which will have a negative impact on property values. Mr. Wright suggested reusing an existing space would be a better option and brought up Wilmot as a possible swing site. He believes Wilmot would be a better option for student security and mental health. The district has secured the funding and now they need to address the issues for Walden students.

George Klauke explained the neighbors have been working with the School District and they have accommodated some things they requested. Now, the School District is asking for a Special Use. Mr. Klauke has some issues with the proposed layout. There is a 2 foot wall and fence outside his property on the northeast corner of Ambleside Drive making his property lower than the field. There was a berm and drains put in to direct the stormwater. The current system works. With the property proposed to be higher, his property will be lower and his property will be devalued. There are 100-year-old Oak trees that will be destroyed. Mr. Klauke believes safety will be an issue because students will be going to school in a construction zone. Mr. Klauke suggested Wilmot, being more open, would be a better swing site and would keep students out of the construction zone.

Stuart Coke lives at Warrington Road and Essex Court which is the driveway of Walden. He is very supportive of the community investing in the schools but is concerned about the stormwater. Homes along Warrington Road currently have lakes in their backyards. The residents made large investments in landscaping. Mr. Coke questioned how this would impact their landscaping. Mr. Coke questioned how snow would be managed during and after construction. He is also concerned about access to his home and believes it will be challenging. Mr. Coke noted pedestrian access has not been discussed. The primary pedestrian access will be Essex Court south of Walden Lane and noted that sidewalk is very narrow. He asked if the

sidewalk could be widened. Mr. Coke suggested utilizing school breaks and allowing construction during that time to accelerate the construction schedule.

Michael Gendell, purchased his home on Ambleside in June of 2025. He has a 2 ½ year-old child and an 8-month-old child. Their home currently backs up to the park. The school will be 25 feet from his lot line. He tried to work with Mr. Simick and was promised a swing site would be given a real effort. Mr. Gendell suggested it could take months or even a year for a swing space to be found, not just weeks. He suggested the school district hire a reputable firm to help achieve alternate swing site results.

Emily Mason lives on Ambleside Drive. She is supportive of new schools, but is concerned about the proposed swing site in a small location and the issues of moving through the site. She asked if there is an opportunity to keep Walden in the current footprint and doing construction in a phased approach. She asked that other options be considered and communicated (to the public) as well as why those options are not suitable.

Mark Freeman is concerned about the lack of communication. He is not convinced the public knows about this meeting. He was not contacted. If the Village does not get more transparent about bond issues, dollar amounts and communication, there will be lawsuits. He noted no letters of support for any of this were received. The only letters received were from those that have challenges. When looking at the plan, he believes the green space at Walden are unique and should be kept. There will be a lot of asphalt and less green space. Mr. Freeman is looking for a quality result. Walden has been improved significantly since he moved to Deerfield. He believes the entire building can be repaired and an addition could be added. This is a lot of money but the amount has not been called out. Mr. Freeman believes the plan should be reconsidered. Ch. Bromberg noted agendas are posted on the Village website. A pre-filing hearing does not require a mailing, but when a public hearing is held, residents within 250 feet of the property are sent mailings and it is also posted in the newspapers.

Adam Spector believes there has been a lack of detail. He urged the detail be provided during the public hearing. Mr. Spector believes the details need to be communicated. He noted the renderings can be produced and details provided. The berms, swales and walls need to be provided. The detention and impact on the trees need to be reviewed. He questioned how many trees would be removed, and how that would be communicated. Ch. Bromberg explained the school's budget is outside the Plan Commission's jurisdiction. The residents passed the referendum. The Plan Commission's concern is the land use and the impact on neighbors.

Commissioner Stolman noted the swing site has been brought up. He asked who was engaged in evaluating the swing site. Commissioner Stolman understands retrofitting a building is difficult, but questioned how was it determined. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they were working with Savills and only considered the areas within Deerfield, Riverwoods and Bannockburn. They cannot transport kids beyond their boundaries. When they received estimates, they also got results about tax sensitivity. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they had a community engagement plan. Throughout the fall and winter, they held 25 information sessions and community meetings with neighbors. Several mailings went out and sessions were listed on the website. The information sessions were recorded and are available on the website. They want to continue contact with the community. Ms. Kedjidjian explained they would send out certified mailings to an area greater than the required 250 feet. They will hold a neighbor open house on May 7th at Walden and will have boards showing the plans in greater detail. The architects and engineers will be available to answer questions starting 6:30 pm. Mr. Nakahara noted due to the proposed height

of the new building, a height modification is being requested therefore the required distance for the certified mailing will be 500 feet from the subject's property line. The School District noted that they will be notifying residents within 755 feet of the property line. The public hearing is scheduled for June 25, 2026.

DOCUMENT APPROVAL

Commissioner Stolman moved, seconded by Commission Rauen to approve the minutes from the March 12, 2026 Plan Commission meeting. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Items from the Commission

Ch. Bromberg noted the commissioners are welcome to attend Board of Trustees meetings, but if there are three or more commissioners at a meeting, it becomes a Plan Commission meeting as well. He asked the commissioners to let staff know when this is to occur. Mr. Schuster explained an agenda must be posted 48 hours in advance of a meeting, per the Open Meetings Act. He suggested letting staff know by the Thursday before a Board of Trustees meeting at the latest. Ms. Lubezny reminded the commissioners to not send email to the group; rather, just send email to staff.

Items from the Staff

Mr. Ryckaert explained the next meeting would be in three weeks and there are a couple of items for this workshop meeting.

Designation of Representative for the next Board of Trustees Meeting

A representative is not needed for the May 4, 2026 Board of Trustees meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Lubezny moved, seconded by Commissioner Rauen, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with a unanimous voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeri Cotton
Secretary