

May 11, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

VIA: Jeffry Rogers, County Administrator
County Administrator's Office

FROM: Cesar Omar DePablo, Development Services Director
Planning and Zoning Department

SUBJECT: Special Exception Actions by the Planning and Zoning Commission on May 11, 2026

For the Board's information, on May 11, 2026, the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) held a duly advertised public hearing to consider an advertised request for a Special Exception(s). Attached to this memorandum are the staff reports and actions of the P&Z on the special exception requests at that scheduled public hearing.

A notification letter was sent on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, to inform the petitioners of the P&Z actions. According to Appendix A, Zoning, Article V, Section 8(1) of the Hernando County Code of Ordinances, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), by a majority vote, may decide to review any special exception decision rendered by the P&Z. If at least a majority (three (3) members) of the governing body do not vote to review the P&Z decision within thirty (30) days, which would be Wednesday, June 10, 2026, the P&Z decision shall be deemed final and subject only to review by the circuit court. The review of the decision by the BOCC shall be at a public hearing held within sixty (60) days of the P&Z decision. The board has the authority to continue, on its own motion, to a later date a final decision on any special exception matter pending before it for review.

The review of decision by the BCC would occur on the regular BCC hearing date of Tuesday, July 7, 2026, (calculated from the date of P&Z decision). "Public notice" shall be in compliance with local and state regulations. Affidavit proof of the required publication and posting of the notice shall be presented at the hearing

The Board may affirm, modify, or reverse the decision of the P&Z at the hearing.

Copies: Applicant's File



STAFF REPORT

HEARINGS: Planning & Zoning Commission: May 11, 2026

APPLICANT: ATA Career Education on behalf of Spring Hill Associates LTD

FILE NUMBER: SE-26-05

REQUEST: Special Exception Use Permit for an expansion of an existing Education Facility

GENERAL LOCATION: North side of Spring Hill Drive, west and east of Kass Circle

PARCEL KEY NUMBER(S): 412084

APPLICANT’S REQUEST

The petitioner is requesting a Special Exception Use Permit to expand an existing Educational Facility (vocational school).

The school currently operates in an approximately 18,000 sq. ft. facility at 7351 Spring Hill Dr, Unit 11, Spring Hill, FL 34606, which includes Units 7351-11, 7353-55, 7357-61, and 7365. The facility currently offers healthcare training programs including medical assisting, dental assisting, practical nursing, and medical coding.

The proposed expansion includes adding 7379 and 7381 Spring Hill Drive within the same plaza, totaling approximately 3,227 sq. ft. This space, previously occupied by Major Toys (retail use), will be converted into an electrical technology training program, including classrooms, office space, storage, a breakroom, and restrooms.

The addition of the 3,227 square feet to the existing facility will increase the total building area to approximately 21,227 square feet.

The petitioner is also requesting to extend operating hours from 8:00 AM–9:00 PM to 8:00 AM–10:00 PM to accommodate additional class offerings.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Site Size 21,227-square-foot plaza situated on a 15.50-acre parcel.

Surrounding Zoning; Land Uses North: PDP(GHC); Commercial Uses & Undeveloped

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South: PDP(SF), (OP) & (MF); Single Family, Multifamily and Office Professional
East: PDP(GHC); Commercial Uses
West: PDP(GHC); Commercial Uses

Current Zoning: Commercial

Future Land Use Map Designation: Commercial

FIRE REVIEW

Hernando County Fire Rescue (HCFR) advises that the petitioner must work closely with HCFR to ensure compliance with all applicable fire codes. This includes requirements for fire alarms, building size considerations, and ensuring that educational occupancy areas are protected throughout by an approved, supervised automatic sprinkler system in accordance with fire code requirements.

UTILITIES REVIEW

Hernando County Utilities Department (HCUD) currently supplies water and wastewater service to this parcel. HCUD has no objection to the special exemption to allow an expansion of an existing educational facility to operate a vocational school.

ENGINEERING REVIEW

The subject site is located on Northeast corner of the intersection of Spring Hill Drive and Kass Circle. The Hernando County Engineer has reviewed the petitioner's request and has no objections to the proposed Special Exception Use Permit.

LAND USE REVIEW

The petitioner has indicated that currently the shopping center has a total of 583 parking spaces plus 25 ADA compliant spaces, serving a total square footage of 116,609 square feet, or a parking ratio of 5.23:1,000 square feet. The existing site has adequate parking spaces for the proposed use.

An Educational Facility is an allowable Special Exception Use in any zoning category provided the appropriate land use approvals are obtained. A Special Exception Use Permit shall be granted only for those buildings, uses, and accessory buildings specifically indicated by the Commission.

A Special Exception Use Permit is an additional use which may be granted by the Planning & Zoning Commission in accordance with the LDRs. As part of the review, the Planning & Zoning Commission must determine that the tract of land is suitable for the type of special exception proposed by virtue of its location, shape, topography and nature of surrounding development. The Planning & Zoning Commission has the ability to assign reasonable conditions to the approval.

A Special Exception Use Permit is a use which is appropriate in a zoning district if safeguards are imposed but which would impair the integrity and character of the district in which it is located, or in adjoining districts unless restrictions or conditions on location, size, extent and character of performance are imposed in addition to those imposed in the ordinance.

Setbacks:

Minimum setbacks:

- Front : 35'
- Sides: 20'
- Rear: 35'

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW

An Educational Facility is an allowable Special Exception Use in any zoning category, provided the appropriate land use approvals are obtained. A special exception use permit may only be granted for the specific buildings, uses, and accessory structures indicated by the Commission. It is an additional use that may be approved by the Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Commission in accordance with the Land Development Regulations (LDRs).

As part of the review, the Planning & Zoning Commission must determine that the tract of land is suitable for the proposed special exception use based on its location, shape, topography, and the nature of surrounding development. The Planning & Zoning Commission also has the authority to assign reasonable conditions to the approval.

A Special Exception Use Permit allows a use that is appropriate in a zoning district if safeguards are imposed, but which could otherwise impair the integrity or character of the district or adjacent districts unless restrictions or conditions on location, size, extent, and performance are applied. It is important to note that the special exception use permit is a land use determination only. All other applicable development regulations must be met if the permit is approved.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The proposed Special Exception Use Permit for an Educational Facility is appropriate based on the following conclusion:

1. The request is compatible with the surrounding land uses and is not adverse to the public interest subject to compliance with all recommended performance conditions.

NOTICE OF APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITY

The special exception process is a land use determination and does not constitute a permit for either construction on, or use of, the property, or a Certificate of Concurrency. Prior to use of, or construction on, the property, the petitioner must receive approval from the appropriate County department(s) for the proposed use.

The granting of this land use determination does not protect the owner from civil liability for recorded deed restrictions which may exceed any county land use ordinances. Homeowners associations or architectural review committees require submission of plans for review and approval. The applicant for this land use request should contact the local association or the Public Records for all restrictions applicable to this property.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission approve the petitioner's request for a Special Exception Use Permit for an Educational Facility with the following performance conditions:

1. The petitioner must obtain all permits from Hernando County and other applicable agencies and meet all applicable land development regulations, for either construction or use of the property, and complete all applicable development review processes.
2. The petitioner shall meet the requirements of the Hernando County Fire Rescue Department.
3. The petitioner shall apply for remodeling permits and meet the minimum requirements of the Hernando County Building Department.
4. The hours of operation are 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM.
5. The Educational facility will be limited to 21,227 square feet.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

On May 11, 2026, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted 3-0 to approve the petitioner's request for a Special Exception Use Permit for an expansion of an existing Education Facility with the following performance conditions.

1. The petitioner must obtain all permits from Hernando County and other applicable agencies and meet all applicable land development regulations, for either construction or use of the property, and complete all applicable development review processes.
2. The petitioner shall meet the requirements of the Hernando County Fire Rescue Department.
3. The petitioner shall apply for remodeling permits and meet the minimum requirements of the Hernando County Building Department.
4. The hours of operation are 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM.
5. The Educational facility will be limited to 21,227 square feet.



STAFF REPORT

HEARINGS: Planning & Zoning Commission: April 13, 2026

APPLICANT: Old Florida Forever, LLC, Joseph Conrad

FILE NUMBER: SE-26-06

PURPOSE: Special Exception Use Permit for an Place of Public Assembly; namely, a venue for Special Events

GENERAL LOCATION: South side of Lake Lindsay Road, approximately 3000' east of Ponce de Leon Boulevard

PARCEL KEY NUMBER: 334427

APPLICANT'S REQUEST:

On August 11, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved the petitioner's request for a Special Exception Use Permit for a Place of Public Assembly; namely, a venue for Special Events with the following conditions of approval:

1. Up to twelve (12) recreational vehicles (RV's) shall be allowed to park on site solely for the multiple-day events, arriving after 12:00 P.M. the day prior to the event and leaving prior to 12:00 P.M. the day after the event ends. Recreational vehicle (RV) hookups shall be allowed for vendors to utilize during events.
2. Up to twenty-six (26) one day events may be held per calendar year from dawn to 10:00 PM. The events shall occur every other week.
3. Multiple day events shall be limited to ten (10) per year and shall not exceed three (3) days in length.
4. No increase in impervious area and no fill within the floodplain shall occur without permitting and any required mitigation/compensation.
5. Recreational vehicles (RVs) shall be located no closer than one hundred (100) feet from any wetland on the property.
6. All events shall have an ending time no later than 10:00 PM
7. The Hernando County Sheriff's Office or Florida Highway Patrol shall be utilized for traffic control during all multi-day events.

The petitioner is requesting the following additions to the previously approved Special Use Permit

1. Three (3) Day events per week, equaling 156 events per year.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS:

	23 acres
Site Size	
Surrounding Zoning; Land Uses	North: Combined Planned Development Project South: Agricultural; Commercial; Light Industrial East: Planned Development Project; Agricultural West: Agricultural; Single-Family Residential
Current Zoning:	AG/Agricultural
Future Land Use Map Designation:	Rural/Conservation

UTILITIES REVIEW:

Hernando County Utilities Department (HCUD) HCUD currently supplies water and wastewater service to this parcel. HCUD has no objection to the Special Exemption.

ENGINEERING REVIEW:

The subject site is located on the South side of Lake Lindsay Road, approximately 3000' east of Ponce de Leon Boulevard. The County Engineer has reviewed the petitioner's request and has comments on the special exception request:

- The petitioner must provide a site plan that shows where additional secondary access will be, including showing spacing that ensures no stacking on county roadway.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REVIEW:

The applicant shall work with Hernando County Fire Rescue (HCFR) to ensure that all the fire codes are met for the proposed remodeling. As such, they are required to meet all fire safety codes prior to their receiving their Certificate of Occupancy.

LAND USE REVIEW:

Places of Public Assembly are included as special exceptions in all approved zoning districts, Appendix A, Article V, Section 8, subsection C(1)(f) of the Hernando County Code of Ordinances.

Setbacks for property zoned AG/Agricultural are:

- Front: 75'
- Side: 35'
- Rear: 50'

A Special Exception Use Permit is an additional use which may be granted by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) in accordance with the Land Development Regulations (LDR). As part

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of the review, the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) must determine that the tract of land is suitable for the type of special exception use proposed by virtue of its location, shape, topography, and nature of surrounding development. The Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) has the ability to assign reasonable conditions to the approval.

The Special Exception Use Permit is a land use determination only. All applicable development rules would have to be met if the permit is approved. Furthermore, special exception use permits shall be in compliance with the minimum Special Exception Use General Standards, Appendix A, Article V, Section 8(B) of the Hernando County Code.

If the Special Exception Use is not established within a period of not more than two (2) years from the approval date, then the Special Exception use permit shall be null and void.

Comments: Staff have reviewed the petitioner’s request to increase the number of events per year to three individual days weekly. Staff found that these requests are unreasonable and will adversely affect the surrounding community.

The following Special Exceptions for Places of Public Assembly; namely, venues for Special Events have been approved over the past 4 years. The maximum number of events that have been approved through this Special Exception permit was 52. On average, the Planning and Zoning Commission approves 12-24 events per year through the Special Exception process.

Property Owner	Number of Events Approved	Overnight Stays Allowed
Steven Berry	15	No Overnight stays
Nathan Randall	24	No Overnight stays
Donald Whitehead	52 (6 Concerts)	No Overnight stays

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW:

The subject property is located within the Rural land use classification on the adopted Future Land Use Map and is characterized by agricultural lots.

Rural Category

Objective 1.04C: The Rural Category allows agriculture, agricultural commercial, agri-industrial, recreation, agritourism and residential land uses of a rural character. Certain neighborhood commercial uses may be allowed subject to locational criteria and performance standards. Residential density is 0.1 dwelling units per gross acre (1 unit per ten gross acres) except where otherwise indicated by the strategies listed herein and incorporated into the land development regulations.

Agricultural Lands Retention Strategies

Objective 1.04E: Agricultural pursuits are recognized as an important part of the economy and culture of Hernando County. The retention of

agriculture will be pursued through multiple strategies in order to support traditional agriculture and changes in agricultural trends.

Strategy 1.04E(3): The review of development proposals in rural lands may include identification of productive farmland and agricultural operations in close proximity to the proposed development to ensure the compatibility of the proposed development with existing and potential agricultural operations and to minimize potential land use conflicts.

Comments: The subject site is in a rural area characterized by large agricultural tracts and is located adjacent to Cortez Boulevard. The proposed number of events of (156) is not compatible with the surrounding area subject to appropriate performance conditions.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The request is to amend the Special Exception Permit to increase the number of approved events to up to three days per weekly:

1. The proposed use is excessive, and inconsistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan, and not compatible with the surrounding area.
2. The requested use would negatively impact the public interest.

NOTICE OF APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITY:

The special exception process is a land use determination and does not constitute a permit for either construction on, or use of, the property, or a Certificate of Concurrence. Prior to use of, or construction on, the property, the petitioner must receive approval from the appropriate County department(s) for the proposed use.

The granting of this land use determination does not protect the owner from civil liability for recorded deed restrictions which may exceed any county land use ordinances. Homeowner associations or architectural review committees require submission of plans for review and approval. The applicant for this land use request should contact the local association or the Public Records for all restrictions applicable to this property.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission deny the petitioner's request to revise the Special Exception Use Permit to increase special events on up to three individual days per week.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On May 11, 2026, the Planning and Zoning Commission voted 3-0 to deny the petitioners request a Special Exception Use Permit for a Place of Public Assembly; namely, a venue for Special Events