



Seattle Neighborhoods



Robert Eagle Staff Middle School Design Departure Advisory Committee

Members

Joseph Amann

Eric Becker

Melanie Davies

Shelly Denier

Liz Kearns

Sarah Ogier

Jim Pettigrew

Jeff Reibman

Robyn Meyer (Alternate)

Clayton Beaudoin (Alternate)

Ex-Officio Members

Maureen Sheehan,

Department of Neighborhoods

Holly Godard,

Seattle Department of Construction &
Inspections

Robert Eagle Staff Middle School

Development Standards Design Departure Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting #1

April 18, 2018

Cascadia Elementary School
1700 N 90th St
Seattle, WA 98103

Members and Alternates Present

Joseph Amann

Liz Kearns

Robyn Myer (Voting Alternate)

Eric Becker

Jim Pettigrew

Clayton Beaudoin (Voting Alternate)

Melanie Davies

Jeff Reibman

Staff and Others Present

Holly Godard

SDCI

Chester Weir

Mahlum Architects

Maureen Sheehan

DON

Chris Fote

Stantec

Rachel Huck

SDOT

Ethan Bernau

SOJ

I. Opening and Introductions

The meeting was opened by Ms. Maureen Sheehan from the City of Seattle, Major Institutions, and Schools Program. Ms. Sheehan welcomed all in attendance and briefly summarized the agenda. Brief introductions followed.

II. Overview of the Process

Ms. Sheehan stated that this process is governed by the Land Use Code Sections of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC Title 23), which specifies how the process works. Ms. Sheehan noted that the City of Seattle does not have a school zone, subject to the development standards of the underlying zone. Since most schools are in residential neighborhoods zoned "single family," schools do not normally meet the underlying zoning requirements. Thus, the Land Use Code contains provisions that allow the Seattle School District to request departures from various development standards.

The Committee is meeting tonight to develop recommendations concerning the School District's requested departures for departures from provisions of the SMC related to land use.

The Committee receives information on the departures being requested from the Seattle Public Schools and its consultants, public testimony, and then the Committee discusses the requested departures.

The Committee may do one of the following:

- 1) Recommend granting the departure as requested;

- 2) Recommend granting the departure with modifications or specific conditions, or
- 3) Recommend denial of the departure.

Conditions or modifications identified should be clearly related to the requested departure and enforceable on the District.

The Committee may develop recommendations at this meeting, or if time does not allow, additional public testimony is desired, or additional information is needed, the Committee may hold up to two additional meetings. If the Committee concludes they have enough information and there is no further benefit from additional public testimony, the Committee can determine to move forward at the end of this meeting in establishing their recommendations; in that case, this would be the only public meeting.

Ms. Sheehan emphasized that the Committee's will make recommendations that will be put into a report that will be reviewed by the Committee and forwarded to Ms. Holly Godard of the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), who will take it into consideration when drafting the Director's decision.

III. Presentation

The Project:

The project scope is to install ten field lighting poles around the existing field and track.

Mr. Ethan Bernau addressed why the field lighting is being proposed now as opposed to when the two new schools were permitted and developed. One reason was the bell times changed which affected school athletics including later practices and games and it also affected youth sports and community use. The other change was the budget programs were allocated for the building of two new elementary and middle schools, and a basic athletic field in between. There was no funding for an upgraded synthetic turf facility and no field lighting. The additional funding was added recently for athletic field upgrades in 2016 by a voter-approved levy.

Mr. Chester Weir of Mahlum Architects presented the constraints the Design Team encountered such as limited space, buried utilities, gas lines, etc. These are key factors to understand the departure request and the decision for the location of the lighting poles.

The project is to install ten poles that are evenly distributed around the field. Mr. Weir noted that Mr. Chris Fote of Stantec will describe the exact height and appropriate location of the poles that will provide the required illumination and safe operation. Mr. Weir showed examples of the proposed poles and mentioned that these poles incorporate the latest LED downlighting technology.

Summary of the Requested Departure:

1. Reduced setback for field lighting:

The underlying zoning prescribes a 25 ft. setback where the school site is immediately adjacent to a residential property and a 15 ft. setback where the school site is across the street from a residential property. The zoning code through this departure process provides for an adjustment up to a 5 ft. minimum setback. The project team is requesting a departure for a setback greater than 5 ft, but less than 15. The setback will only apply to the two poles at the north side at the edge of the field.

The departure request is for the two north poles be located at the outer edge of the existing track, to the north of the 15 ft. setback line, but keeping the poles to the south of the existing fence, which is setback approximately 10' from the property line. The project also proposes to restripe the track from 5 to 4 lanes.

Mr. Weir stated that the cost impacts for relocating utilities have not been fully quantified but are likely to be prohibitive.

If the poles are located to the south of the 15' setback it would put the poles in the middle of the track. There are existing gas lines that run below the middle of the track that would be expensive to move. If the poles are located further south, the poles will be on the field and could pose a hazard. Working

with the district, the design team determined that placing the poles north of the 15 ft. setback line makes the most sense.

Lighting Technology:

Mr. Weir introduced Mr. Chris Fote of Stantec to briefly discuss the lighting technology.

Mr. Fote noted that he prepared the proposal for the lighting project. The primary focus is to minimize impacts of light and glare on the community, and design to meet the City of Seattle's recommended guidelines for lighting. With the new LED flood lights, it provides high efficiency and better light control that leads to less energy. The downlight technology is also designed specifically to minimize any direct glare and spill impacts.

He provided photos and diagram of the proposed lights as well as analysis of the light levels with the proposed departure request. He also showed the light levels along the neighboring property line.

He evaluated the alternatives if the two non-conforming light poles were eliminated and if the requested departure is denied. The potential impact includes unsafe lighting condition on the field, the cost of relocating the poles and utilities, rebuilding the track, and safety.

IV. Committee Clarifying Questions

Ms. Sheehan opened the floor for Committee clarifying questions.

Ms. Melanie Davis asked why not place the poles at the 5 ft. setback. Mr. Weir responded that it could potentially work in some locations, but they were looking for consistency around the track. In addition, there are storm utilities in the planting bed that could be impacted by poles in this location.

She also wanted to hear more about who will be using the field besides the two schools and how is it going to be managed if it will be shared by both the schools and the community. The primary users of the field will be Robert Eagle Staff and Cascadia schools. Lincoln High School could potentially use the field for football practice. The field will also be used by community groups and athletic programs through Seattle Parks and Recreation. The makeup of the current conditions of the field will not change. The field is open for use until 10:00 pm.

The traffic analysis was done through the SEPA process. The noise and hours of operation are consistent with the other School District's policies. The field lighting is programmed to turn off at 10:00 pm and no other field activities are scheduled past 9:45 pm. These are self-imposed conditions that are in place and there will be no amplification or use of speakers to be use in the field.

Mr. Jeff Reibman noted that the width of 92nd street ROW is greater than 25 ft. He asked that the setback is not specific to lighting or any of the property onsite. Mr. Weir noted that they are asking for a departure only for the two light poles.

Ms. Robyn Myer asked if the track will be keep intact and will it hold any track meet. The track is not built to accommodate track competition. It is an asphalt track and the lane widths would be reduced slightly once it is restriped; it does not change the condition of the track.

Ms. Myer asked how the direction of the light is determined. Mr. Fote commented that the lights are pre-aimed when manufactured so it knows the angle of each light. There is a laser light on the poles that set the alignment of the lights. From time to time, the lights are checked as a requirement to make sure it follows the required light levels and adjust it as necessary. She also asked why the lighting levels are different behind A pole than B pole. He added that the A poles are much shorter because it serves infield lighting. The B poles are much higher since it covers a large distance and generates more light.

Mr. Jim Pettigrew had no questions.

Ms. Liz Kearns asked if the lighting will affect Pilling's Pond. Mr. Fote noted that with the recent technology, they did an analysis of the lighting and it calculates zero or no measurable light spills that is being delivered to the pond. She also asked if there are existing field restrooms outside the middle school building and the response was yes.

Mr. Joe Amman asked about community access to the field since he noticed lately that the gates are closed and locked. A response was made that the gate at the back-parking lot is secured for safety. The general approach is the field is open for community use if there are no scheduled school district events.

A question was asked if there are programmable options for the lights and if a timer can be set to turn off the lights when not in use. Mr. Fote responded that it is designed with a timer to turn off at 10:00 pm, and the lighting system is circuited, but it is controlled by a programmable time clock, and it is accessed by remote and wireless. The programming is controlled by the School District's building automation. Under the Joint-Use agreement, the Parks will work with the school and the lights will be turned off if the field is not in use. The School District controls and directs the light shut off.

Mr. Amman asked if there is a way that a heat map or elevation map be produced that shows the candle power. Mr. Fote mentioned that the most critical number is to identify the spill light and the highest intensity of the lights falls on the field. He added that the report was generated using these numbers for planning purposes. Mr. Amman also asked why the numbers are higher for the poles that are further away. Mr. Fote noted that the distribution of the light comes out from the fixture and it is not a perfect uniform circle.

Mr. Amman asked if there was SEPA analysis done for the neighborhood having a 90 ft. pole. Mr. Fote responded that there was a SEPA evaluation done and the poles were designed to minimize the bulk and light overflow. Bishop Blanchet High School was the first incarnation of the recent technology.

A question was asked about the cost difference of the project by having the proposed departure. A response was made that the proposed setback departure will cost less because there will be less relocation of the gas lines that are in the middle of the track as well as utilities that exist below the track.

Mr. Clayton Beaudoin asked about locating the poles outside the fence and its impact to the track. Mr. Fote mentioned that locating the poles outside the fence will be more visually exposed to the properties of the northside while having them inside the fence will hide it.

Mr. Eric Becker inquired what the current level of lighting was on the street. Mr. Fote mentioned as part of the Master Use Permit (MUP) process for the City of Seattle, a lighting report was prepared, and an analysis and evaluation was done regarding the existing lighting in the area. Samples of light level readings inside and outside the site were taken. The lighted parking lot generated a higher light level source as well as the street lighting.

Ms. Holly Godard asked if any of the bugs will be attracted to the lights. Mr. Fote mentioned that the lights will attract the bugs, but the buzzing sound is from an old technology. There will be no buzzing sound because of the newer technology.

Mr. Reibman noted that the question tonight is not about whether the field will get lit or not, that is being evaluated in the SEPA process. The clarifying question tonight is about the effect of the proposed setback departure and does it change the traffic, noise, circulation, and parking from the placement of the light poles and not whether they exist or not.

A comment was made that four years ago, the community pressed the issue about night time activities and the concern about parking in the area. She noted the amplification issue be discussed and included as a condition to grant the departure request. The School District issued a SEPA determination in January and a public meeting was held. The District's determination has been appealed. There is a condition already in place that there will be no amplification.

A comment was made if the location of the light poles will have any change in the character and scale of the poles and will the change in use impacts traffic, noise, and circulation and the response was there will be no impact.

A comment was made if there were any alternative analysis done with the different options regarding the outer lane of the track besides striping. The design team looked at the alternatives and they were conscientious about the school's budget and ensure that any disruptions are minimized.

A comment was made that if there were no scheduled events on the field, the lights are turned off. The answer was that any field event communication is between the Parks Department and the School District, and currently there has been a huge demand of the field every night.

A question was asked if the project is going to place the light poles within the standard setback if the departure was denied. To provide a safe illumination of the field, the design team is compelled to look at the location of the light poles. The team has not designed that scenario and it is hopeful that the Committee will evaluate the departure request and its impacts.

V. Public Comments and Questions

Ms. Sheehan opened the floor for public comments and questions.

(Editor's Note: The comments shown below are summaries of statements provided. They are not transcriptions and have been shortened and edited to include the major points raised. Full comments are retained in the files in voice recording (.mp3) form)

Comment from William Gerdes: Mr. William Gerdes commented about the locked fence and the accessibility of the field. He wants to make sure that there is accountability about ensuring that the lights are turned off at the appropriate time because the community will depend on them, and he felt that a lack of connection between the school and the community exist.

Comment from Lori Bienhoff: Ms. Bienhoff lives at 92nd and Woodlawn and she commented that the Committee should address the amplification. She noted that there is so much noise on the weekend because teams use noise makers and are very loud. Turning off the lights at 10:00 pm is too late for residents that have alternative work schedules. Parking is an issue and should require participants on the playfield should use the school's parking lot. She also would like to know who will be in charge turning off the lights when games are called due to rain. She also would like to have the lights installed inside the field on the concrete path.

Comment from Bill Farmer: Mr. Farmer is the board president of Friends of the Athletic Fields and he commented that this is a great project. He has been following this issue for a long time. He noted that the Wilson Pacific playfield was at this location and there were concerns that because of the school project, these playfields will be taken away. He added that having the two schools side by side and having synthetic turf allows the kids to play year-round and can handle heavy use, which is great. He mentioned that this project is good, and it is healthy for the community as it activates the space. He added that the departure request is insignificant.

Comment from Chris Jackins: Mr. Jackins, is a coordinator for the Seattle Committee to Save Schools provided a copy of a list that summarizes on why this Committee should reject the departure being requested.

Comment from Brian Jacoby-McCurdy: Mr. Jacoby-McCurdy commented that he supports the project. He mentioned that he was a former marching band member and participated in night practices and noted that the lighting makes all the difference. He would like to see the lighting be utilized.

Ms. Sheehan mentioned that she also received written comments over email and she shared it with the Committee members.

VI. Committee Deliberation

Ms. Sheehan opened the discussions for committee deliberation. She asked the Committee to deliberate on the need for the departure and then discuss on whether to recommend or deny with or without any conditions.

The Committee began their deliberation by discussing the requested departure.

1. Reduced setback for field lighting:

Mr. Pettigrew commented that he would approve the departure based on the initial presentation and the location of the poles does not make any difference since the lights will be on when SEPA approves them to be.

Mr. Reibman commented that he would approve the departure. He sees as an improvement because it utilizes the design that is less costly to the public and there is no negative impact.

Ms. Davies commented that she would approve the departure. She noted that there are a few management issues that needs to be addressed and it will be up to the community to pursue and meet with the school and the Parks Department to resolve any of the issues.

Mr. Beaudoin did not hear anything from the presentation that would have him deny the departure and there is nothing in the evaluation criteria is affected by the departure.

Mr. Becker said he will vote for the departure and if there are any questions regarding the issues, there are resources available that could clarify these issues including traffic, etc.

Mr. Amann commented that he is torn about the departure. The school district should have thought about this before everything was built. He is 60% in favor of not granting the departure.

Ms. Kearns and Myer and would both vote for the departure and they were comfortable with what was presented. Ms. Kearns noted that she was sensitive to the comments she heard from the public.

Ms. Godard commented her job is to ask and stimulate questions from the Committee to make sure they understand the issue regarding when to turn on and off the lights, the joint use of the field by the community, the school and the Parks Department and the location of the poles in question.

A comment was made if the SEPA process includes amplification and lighting on the field. A response was made that the SEPA and special exception are connected to allow or disallow this project to continue.

Mr. Reibman noted that the SEPA process that is under appeal is specific to the restriction, time of use, amplification, etc. He noted that they heard valid concerns from the public about these issues, and the SEPA process should address those issues. The SEPA appeal is scheduled on May 14th. The construction goal for this project is for this coming summer and the decision on the appeal may affect the timeline.

Ms. Sheehan noted that most of the Committee members supports the departure. There are questions regarding how to address the management issues, access to the field in relation with the Parks and school communication, frustrations from the initial school building planning. She asked that based on these questions, are there any conditions the Committee would like to propose.

A comment was made that any conditions added to the departure request may skew the process that is already happening. He suggested to have SEPA handle these conditions and focus on what the Committee is assigned to review.

Ms. Davies commented that the decision and how this Committee concluded should be presented in the report.

A comment was made that any commentary should focus on the location of the lights whether they are inside the track or where the poles exist rather than how these lights will be managed.

A suggestion was made to approve the departure to a minimum of 5 ft. inside the fence.

A question for the Design Team was if all the poles were located inside the track, is there a way to angle the lights to the track. Mr. Fote noted that the cut off will be dramatic that all the lights will be dumped offsite.

A comment was made that he does not hear from the Committee members imposing any specific conditions to the departure being requested.

VI. Committee Recommendations

Ms. Sheehan opened the discussion for Committee recommendations and noted that the Committee had deliberated on the departure being requested.

Mr. Reibman introduced a motion to approve the departure as requested with a preference for the design as presented and the lights inside the fence, and it was seconded.

There was a discussion about applying a distinct color paint to the missing lane from the rest of the track for safety reasons. A comment was made that any safety conditions attached to the departure request is necessary. The goal is to recommend an alternative solution that allow to have these light poles be put in a safe and consistent location outside the perimeter that the Code allows.

Mr. Becker commented that the School District will do what is best for the kids. He noted that adding any paint, stripe or contrasting colors may add more cost for the School District in the future. The School District may have to make a choice in maintaining the playfield versus something else.

A comment was made about padding for more safety than painting the lane.

Mr. Reibman suggested to have an amended motion to add a condition that the outside line of the track be striped in another color to indicate that is the edge of the running area.

A comment was made that he does not feel that putting any conditions regarding safety is necessary and have the School District make the decision about safety after they evaluated it further. He suggested that the Committee should focus on the issue and approve the departure without any conditions and allow the current process to move on.

Mr. Reibman reiterated that there is a motion to approve the departure as stated earlier. By show of hands, a quorum being present and the majority of those present having voted in the affirmative, the motion passed.

Ms. Sheehan mentioned that there is an opportunity to provide a minority report to the Committee's recommendation for those who voted against the majority.

VII. Adjournment and scheduling of next meeting

No further business being before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned.