



Planning & Zoning Commission

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Minutes

Planning and Zoning Commission's Recreation Subcommittee

Thursday, March 28, 2024, at 12:00 pm

No physical location. The meeting was held electronically.

P&Z Commissioners in Attendance:

Michael Cammeyer, P&Z Commission Secretary, Recreation Subcommittee Chair
Paul Lebowitz, P&Z Commission Chairman, Recreation Subcommittee Member
Neil Cohn, P&Z Commission Vice-Chairman, Recreation Subcommittee Member

Planning & Zoning Staff in Attendance:

Michelle Perillie, Deputy Planning and Zoning Director
Amanda Trianovich, Planning and Zoning Planner

Members of the Public In Attendance:

Russell Oost-Lievense	Julianne Mulvey	Rebecca Samuel	James Adrian
Carmen Roda	Kevin Christie	Adam Behrends	Johanna Martell
Emma Cusato	Health Talbott	Barry Beattie	Harris Falk
James McGeehan	VJ Sarullo	Linda Warshavsky	Lawrence Tirreno
Jen Fava	Will Koshansky	Gately Ross	Jeff Mitchell

Agenda

1. Review of Subcommittee's Mission Statement seen [here](#).

Michael Cammeyer, P&Z Commission Secretary, Recreation Subcommittee Chair started the meeting and read the revised Recreation Mission Statement into the record.

Paul Lebowitz, P&Z Commission Chairman, Recreation Subcommittee Member approved the Recreation Mission Statement.

Neil Cohn, P&Z Commission Vice-Chairman, Recreation Subcommittee Member also approved the Recreation Mission Statement.

2. Discussion of athletic field lighting for properties seen [here](#) and the current regulations set forth by the (now expired) Stipulation and Settlement Agreement seen [here](#).

Mr. Cammeyer opened the meeting to the Public to hear their athletic field lighting needs and concerns.

Will Koshansky, Staples Boy's Lacrosse Head Coach, stated it would be beneficial to allow the Staples stadium to be lit an hour later until 9 pm on weeknights. The benefits would be more practice times for the High School sports program and the Youth programs. The ability to hire more coaches as a lot of the positions are voluntary and they have regular Monday through Friday 9 am-5 pm jobs.

Mr. Cammeyer asked Mr. Koshansky if he felt limited and that the Staples field is the only location to have practice in shoulder seasons.

Mr. Koshansky agreed and stated having lighted fields at other locations would create more opportunities for Westport's sporting teams. It would give sporting teams other than football the Friday night lights experience.

Carmen Roda, Operations Manager Parks and Recreation stated having lighting at the PJ Romano field would be beneficial for safe practices in late fall when we lose natural lighting. We would be able to serve more town sports by lighting Westport's fields during all seasons of the year. It would also provide an opportunity for more night games as our youth sports are increasing in participation. With a little adjustment, we can serve the needs of our sporting teams while being very respectful of the neighbors.

Mr. Roda discussed the current lighting technology available and how it prevents light from crossing over to residential properties.

Mr. Cammeyer asked Mr. Roda if there are public restrooms near the fields and if he sees a need to review our current regulations to allow for more bathrooms.

Mr. Roda stated that there are bathroom facilities located near some of the fields listed [here](#).

Heather Talbott is Co-President of PAL's Girls Lacrosse, on the PAL Basketball Board, Youth Coach, and Westport Parent with children in sports. Ms. Talbott stated having additional field lighting will provide flexibility in scheduling due to rainouts etc. There is a healthy balance between what the athletic teams need while respecting the residential neighbors.

Mr. Cohn suggested that Staff compile a list of the athletic fields and what we are looking to achieve.

Mr. Cammeyer agreed and asked the meeting participants to email him bullet points of what they would like to achieve in athletic field lighting so we may compile a list for the next Recreation Subcommittee. Please email cammeyer.pz@gmail.com and atryanovich@westportct.gov.

Russell Oost-Lievense, Staples Soccer's Coach, agreed with what has been suggested as far as being able to extend the lighting times at Staples field and also allow for lighting at other Town athletic fields would be a huge asset.

Mr. Cammeyer asked if the soccer teams have use of an athletic field with lights.

Barry Beattie, Staples Girl's Soccer Coach replied "No". The available lighted athletic fields are centered around varsity sports and in 12 years, the girls' soccer teams were only able to use a lighted field twice.

Mr. Beattie also suggested having turf at Loeffler Field as grass fields are not easy to play soccer.

Mr. Cammeyer asked if there were any athletic field limitations regarding girls' field hockey and lacrosse.

VJ Sarullo, Staples Athletic Director stated the girl's field hockey and lacrosse teams play on Ginny Parker Field which has no field lighting. This also limits the playing times for Youth teams due to the loss of natural lighting.

Mr. Sarullo recognized the regulations should be updated to allow for more lighted fields so more teams can use the fields. Mr. Sarullo also recognized that Staples abuts residential neighborhoods and would like to remain good neighbors.

Mr. Sarullo added that since we do not have lighted fields, it is a concern that students have to have early dismissals to make a practice or a game before the sun goes down.

Mr. Sarullo also touched on the new field lighting technology as there is no longer splash back on abutting neighbors. Mr. Sarullo also added that Westport is at a significant disadvantage when comparing athletic field availability and field lighting with the surrounding Towns involved in the tournaments. Westport's sporting teams should be the best of the best and we are behind where we should be, and additional lights can help us get to where we want to be.

Emma Cusato, Westport Resident stated the concern with neighbors is not the light pollution but the noise, privacy, and littering. Lighting the fields will mean more noise and more littering more of the time. To be part of the process of finding a balance is important. If the Town were to create more fields would be beneficial so the fields we do have now are not used so intensely.

Rebecca Samuel, a Westport Resident, agreed with Ms. Cusato's statements. Ms. Samuel also added that there is a lot of trash during and after the games thrown over the fence at Ginny Parker Field. Ms. Samuel also agreed that bathroom facilities should be reviewed.

Mr. Sarullo acknowledged Ms. Cusato's and Ms. Samuel's concerns and stated that Staples is currently working through their social media platforms to encourage spectators and students to keep the fields clean.

Kevin Christie, Westport Parent and Board of Education member agreed that the early dismissal so the players can make the games before the sun goes down is a concern as they are students first.

Mr. Christie mentioned gender equity is also a concern regarding field usage availability.

Mr. Christie stated that he has seen the new athletic field lighting, and it is eye-opening on how far it has come.

Mr. Roda suggested that we must think about field lighting differently as there are not always 50-foot towers with big lights. We can accomplish the same with temporary lights where they can go up for practice or a game and then come down.

Mr. Roda also mentioned that any resident who experiences littering on their property due to a game to please contact his office.

Mr. Cammeyer went through a PowerPoint presentation that depicts the new athletic field lighting which can be seen [here](#).

Lawrence Tirreno, a Westport Resident discussed his concerns regarding the lighting of the athletic fields and resident safety. Mr. Tirreno also read through the (now expired) Stipulation and Settlement Agreement seen [here](#).

3. Review of Dark Sky compliance and sports field lighting seen [here](#).

Jen Fava, Director of Parks and Recreation mentioned that she has had meetings with [Musco's](#) sports lighting who is a member of and in favor of [Dark Skies International](#). Ms. Fava stated any new athletic field lighting would meet the requirements set forth by Dark Skies International.

Ms. Fava also added that the new athletic field lighting has dimming options where the lights will dim when the game is over where there is enough light for safe pedestrian exiting and then turn off when the field is closed and can be controlled remotely.

Mr. Roda mentioned that Musco has experts who will come out to the site to give their expert advice pre, during, and post installation and will certify that they meet the Dark Sky standards.

Mr. Cammeyer thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 1:21 pm.

A full audio recording of the meeting is archived and available on the Town of Westport's website, [here](#).

Respectfully Submitted By:

Amanda Trianovich, Planner

April 2, 2024