



Planning & Zoning Commission

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Minutes

Planning and Zoning Commission's Recreation Subcommittee

Thursday, June 27, 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:

Amanda Trianovich, Planning and Zoning Planner

Members of the Public In Attendance:

Bill Humphrey	Kayla Mutchler	Danielle Dobin	Emma Cusato
Carmen Roda	Jeff Mitchell	Julianne Mulvey	Heather Talbott

Agenda

- 1. Review of participant feedback on athletic field lighting for properties seen [here](#).**

Michael Cammeyer, P&Z Commission Secretary, Recreation Subcommittee Chair started the meeting and read the first agenda item into the record.

Mr. Cammeyer stated that not all athletic fields are created equal and they should be treated differently. The focus should be on lots that are adjacent to an arterial road such as Staples High School, Wakeman Park, and P.J. Romano Field.

Amanda Trianovich, Planning and Zoning Planner stated any new lighting developments for athletic fields will be subject to Special Permit/Site Plan approval and site-specific details can be reviewed during that forum.

Mr. Cammeyer described feedback received from neighbors which included sightlines, privacy, and noise concerns. Feedback from coaches was the desire to extend the playing hours which will open more time slots for teams to practice during fall months when the hours of daylight are reduced.

Mr. Cammeyer also noted that the lack of athletic field lighting puts the Town of Westport sporting teams at a disadvantage from a competitive standpoint as many of the other surrounding towns have their fields lit.

Paul Lebowitz, P&Z Commission Chairman, Recreation Subcommittee Member agreed that the lighting of athletic fields should a Special Permit/Site Plan approval and the focus should be on the larger fields at this time.

2. Discussion of temporary vs permanent lighting and times of the day.

Danielle Dobin stated that the type of lights is less relevant than light pollution and the hours. Limiting the applicability to properties either on an arterial road or of a certain size would easily eliminate the applicability to smaller fields located in purely single family residential neighborhoods.

Emma Cusato agreed that as a neighbor abutting Jinny Parker Field located on the Staples H.S. lot her primary concern is noise and privacy and not permanent vs temporary but would prefer temporary as they would only be used on limited occasions at certain times of the year.

Mr. Cammeyer added that the option of additional screening should be discussed.

Ms. Cusato suggested site visits as the topography changes for residential properties abutting Staples H.S.

Neil Cohn, P&Z Commission Vice-Chairman, Recreation Subcommittee Member stated the focus should be on screening and making sure that the residential properties are protected as much as possible.

Carmen Roda, Operations Manager Parks and Recreation stated the new temporary lights at PAL football have zero light spillage. These temporary lights could be brought to Jinny Parker Field during the nighttime so the residential property owners can get a sense of the possible lighting conditions.

Mr. Cohn mentioned that temporary lights will have generators and create more noise pollution.

Mr. Roda stated that the higher efficiency generators are less noisy.

Mr. Cammeyer has received feedback from coaches that they would like to see fields being used until 9pm Monday through Friday. There is a mechanism in place where appropriate staff can remotely control the lights from their cell phones therefore, they do not need to be present to turn the lights off.

Mr. Cammeyer also suggested that the Special Permit/Site Plan approval have a Parks & Rec. Staff member and/or the Athletic Director contact information in case any issues arise. Mr. Cammeyer also noted that we should address amplified music.

Mr. Roda stated a few fields have amplified sound but are rarely used. Mr. Roda would like the ability to also extend the field time on Friday's and Saturday's to 10pm. He also does not see a need for field lighting on Sundays.

Mr. Roda added lights are a game changer for coaches who work and volunteer their time to be able to give the kids the opportunity to practice. It helps Parks & Rec. to efficiently use the fields so we're not scrambling to book 600 kids between 5:00 and 7:00. We can kind of break it up where you have a 5:00 to 7:00 and a 7:00 to 9:00 for your older kids.

Mr. Lebowitz asked Mr. Roda if the practice and game schedules are available ahead of time for the neighbors to be aware.

Mr. Roda said yes.

Mr. Lebowitz asked if fields were to have permanent lighting, would the lights be off when there is no practice and/or games?

Mr. Roda said yes, the lights will not be on when the fields are not being used.

Ms. Cusato expressed concern over more fields being lit 5 days a week until 9pm. and asked if the fields were lit would the Town rent the fields out to private clubs.

Mr. Cammeyer stated that if the Town were to rent out a field it would be a Special Permit application and more restrictive conditions can be applied.

Mr. Cohn stated the Jinny Parker Field is the only field for our youth girls' field hockey and lacrosse to play on.

Mr. Roda said having the field hockey and lacrosse fields lit would benefit the girl's youth sports tremendously.

Mr. Dobin said there is a disparity concerning access to fields by gender. The result of the existing lighting at fields means that Jinny Parker and girls sports have less access to lit fields than the boys. This was an unintended consequence of the stipulated legal settlement that was in place until recently between the town and some of the neighbors. Limiting lights at Jinny Parker as opposed to other fields starts us off on the wrong foot with regard to addressing gender disparity.

Julianne Mulvey, neighbor to Long Lots, stated that Staples is competitive in sports and not having field lighting has not put the Town at a disadvantage.

Ms. Mulvey also stated that it seems premature to talk about lighting fields when we have existing fields, such as Loeffler, that are being underutilized and not being maintained.

Ms. Mulvey added that lights equal noise the longer the lights are on the louder it is.

Ms. Cusato agreed and added sports are being funneled to a few fields because they are turfed. Pushing more traffic and usage onto these limited fields is worsening it for their neighbors and it would be great to make use of all of these other fields.

Mr. Cammeyer stated that the fixing of the fields is not under the Commission's purview. This forum is to provide flexibility within our regulations if the Town wants to light an athletic field.

Ms. Dobin added there is a Parks & Rec. Commission and submitting a letter regarding the dire conditions of some of our fields could be a good start so all fields in Westport can be utilized.

Ms. Mulvey stated she would like to see Long Lots terrace one and terrace two segregated from lighting regulations.

3. Discussion of the next steps in implementing athletic field lighting.

Mr. Cammeyer asked P&Z staff to start drafting a text amendment for the subcommittee to review in September.

Ms. Trianovich, P&Z Planner, informed the attendees if they would like to be noticed on the next Recreation Subcommittee meeting to send a request to pandz@westportct.gov and we will add your email to the distribution list.

Mr. Cammeyer thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 1:32 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

July 3, 2024