



## Agenda Item Summary

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### **Submitted By**

Plan Commission through Tammie Grossman, Development Customer Services Director

### **Reviewed By**

A.M. Zayyad

### **Agenda Item Title**

**Concur with the Plan Commission's Recommendation and Adopt an Ordinance Granting a Special Use Permit to Install Six 80-90-Foot-Tall Light Standards at the Oak Park-River Forest High School South Athletic Field located at 501 Lake Street**

### **Overview**

The Applicant, Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200, is requesting a special use permit pursuant to Article 9: Site Development Standards, Section 9.2 (E) 3 of the Village of Oak Park Zoning Ordinance, to permit light standards taller than otherwise allowed. The Applicant proposes to replace four - 98-foot-tall light standards that were approved pursuant to Ordinance 2002-O-52 with 6 light standards (4 at 80 feet tall and 2 at 90 feet tall) surrounding the athletic field located on the South Campus tract on the south side of Lake Street between East Avenue and Scoville Avenue.

### **Recommendation**

The Plan Commission recommends approval of the special use permit.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff supports the Plan Commission's recommendation, except for condition number 12 set forth in the Plan Commission's Findings of Fact and Recommendation regarding the prohibition of a public address system. Staff believes this condition is not related to the special use permit application as the request relates to only the height of the proposed light standards. An alternative ordinance has been added to this agenda item which excludes the adoption of the prohibited public address condition. However, if the Village Board wishes to modify the public address system condition, alternative language is provided below.

### **Fiscal Impact**

N/A

### **Background**

The subject property is located in the OS - Open Space Zoning District. The property is currently improved with synthetic turf athletic fields and a running track. School District 200 received special use approval via Ordinance 2002-O-52 (attached) on September 17, 2002, allowing the installation of four (4) 98-foot-tall light standards. As presented to the Village Board at their meeting on June 21, 2022, School District 200 is

modifying its athletic fields on the south side of Lake Street and those between the tennis courts and football field on the north side of Lake Street. Due to the re-designation of field use on the south field, the lighting needs will change. School District 200 is entering into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Park District of Oak Park relative to sharing resources. This is one of the main reasons for requesting that the new lights are allowed to stay on until 10:00 p.m. in order to be consistent with the Park District field schedule. Only the Park District programming will be scheduled during the 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. time period. The current Special Use Permit Ordinance only allows the lights to remain on until 8:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. School District 200 has indicated it will adhere to all the other conditions in place per Ordinance 2002-O-52.

### **Alternatives**

Deny the special use application.

Approve the special use application with modifications. This could include revised language regarding the public announcement system such as the following, "A non-permanent (portable) Public Announcement system shall be allowed."

### **Previous Board Action**

September 17, 2002 - Approval of a Zoning Ordinance text amendment to allow by special use light standards for athletic fields no greater than 100 feet.

September 17, 2002 - Approval of four light standards at a height not to exceed 100 feet for the South Campus Tract.

### **Citizen Advisory Commission Action**

July 21, 2022: Oak Park - River Forest High School Superintendent Greg Johnson presented an overview and introduced the project team. Park District of Oak Park representative Maureen McCarthy provided an understanding of the reasons they need to collaborate with the High School regarding the use of their fields. Mr. Johnson then reviewed the calendar of public meetings regarding the High School's proposed improvements. Ms. Alyson Sternquist, architect and project manager, provided an overview of the proposed revised programming for the subject property and the fields north of Lake Street so that the Plan Commission and the public can better understand the need for the new light standards. Mr. Cliff Mottl, a lighting expert for the High School, provided an overview of the illumination study. He indicated that the High School would have the ability to dim the lights and turn them off easily. He stated that the proposed lights will be LED lights that will reduce glare and light spillage.

The Plan Commission began with questions. The commissioners asked about the need for extended hours. It was explained that youth affiliates need to use the fields during the day ending no later than 7:00 p.m. while needing to shift the Park District's adult programming later in the day and into the 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. time slot. Superintendent Johnson stated that there would be no High School programming for the 8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. time slot. It was asked if there could be a compromise with extending the use of the Park District fields to 11:00 p.m. at Ridgeland Commons and restricting the hours for the High School south field to 9:00 p.m. It was confirmed that 11:00 p.m. for the Park District fields would be too late for the participants. It was asked if the High School lights could be turned off when not in use. It was affirmed by the High School representatives that the lights could be turned off. It was also asked if the late-night lights could be used for only a certain number of months. It was indicated that four months out of the year would be needed for the lights from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. It was indicated that the lights themselves were not an issue, but the

extended hours were an issue.

Cross-examination began with Mr. Stephen Allsteadt, 136 Frank Lloyd Wright Lane, who asked questions regarding the following; the Concordia University field contract with the High School, the Imagine Committee findings, current lighting on the field vs. proposed lighting on the field, and brightness in certain areas - mainly the northwest corner, spring, and fall usage, shared use with the Park District, the adult softball league numbers, youth sports numbers, and current use of the baseball fields and best location for the new field.

Public Testimony began with Ms. Leisa Marthaler, 137 Francisco Terrace, who stated her concerns with the proposed lights and stated that the area will become even more congested if approved. Village Planner Failor read into the record approximately 30 minutes worth of written public testimony submitted to the Plan Commission both in favor and in opposition to the application.

The Plan Commission continued with additional questions and statements. The Plan Commission discussed the proposed light glare and spillage compared to the existing lights. It was asked if there could be a compromise regarding the late-night light timing. The Plan Commission continued to discuss possible compromises such as shutting off the lights when not in use and limiting usage after 8:00 p.m. to four months of the year. The Plan Commission discussed the use of the fields. Superintendent Johnson agreed to shut off the lights when there will be no activity as well as limit the extended light hours to only four months out of the year during March, April, May, and June. The Plan Commission inquired as to who would be using the fields during the 8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. time slot during that four-month period. Superintendent Johnson indicated it would be for adult softball. Park District representative McCarthy stated adult softball but mentioned some other uses.

Chair Sims asked for a straw poll on the application. The Plan Commission vote was four in favor of recommending approval with conditions and two against. The Plan Commission requested the applicant return to its next meeting with a detailed list of groups who will use the south field during the 8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. time slot in March, April, May, and June of each year.

August 4, 2022: Superintendent Johnson presented an overview of the requested information by the Plan Commission at the July 21, 2022 meeting. The architect for the project, Alyson Sternquist, provided an overview of the impact of the proposed lights on the surrounding neighborhood and the impact of the lights located at the softball field in particular. Ms. Sternquist indicated that based on a photograph provided by School District 200, there would be no light spillage beyond the property lines and that there will be no glare directed toward the residential neighbors. Essentially, no light will be directed toward any residential windows with the proposed light standards. The lighting technicians/experts for School District 200 confirmed this statement.

The Plan Commission asked questions on the stated conditions provided by Superintendent Johnson. The commissioners asked about School District 200's public interactions prior to the hearing. Mr. Johnson indicated that there were many interactions with the neighbors and the Oak Park community. School District 200 provided compromises based on those conversations.

Park District of Oak Park Executive Director Jan Arnold responded to a commissioner's question regarding the usage of the fields during the extended lighting time of 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. She indicated that it would be

used for adult programming and by affiliate organizations five nights a week during the stated four-month period.

The Plan Commission asked questions regarding the proposed lights. Commissioners asked about the potential impacts of the new lighting upon the residential neighbors as mentioned above. It was also suggested that the baseball field be relocated. It was mentioned that the lights should be on timers with an exact cutoff at 10:00 p.m. A discussion was had on the potential for the lights to remain on for a few minutes if a game was not finished by 10:00 p.m. Executive Director Arnold indicated that the lights are on timers and there is no need for games to go beyond 10:00 p.m. It was mentioned by a commissioner that uses on Sundays should not be restricted as they are currently.

Mr. Stephen Allsteadt, 136 Frank Lloyd Wright Lane, was allowed additional cross-examination of the applicant regarding questions pertaining only to new information. He asked about prohibiting a public address system, commercial concessions, and restricting the number of days for light usage.

The Plan Commission continued to debate the need for additional conditions such as prohibiting a public address system and commercial concessions as well as being stricter with the 10:00 p.m. cut-off of the lights. Commissioner Clark made a motion to recommend approval of the application, seconded by Commissioner Gallagher with conditions. One condition was added regarding the public address system. The full list of conditions can be found in the attached written Findings of Fact and Recommendation. The applicant was supportive of meeting the conditions from the 2002 ordinance as part of the 2022 ordinance, as modified.

Plan Commission meeting videos can be found here:

[<https://www.oak-park.us/your-government/citizen-commissions/commission-tv>](https://www.oak-park.us/your-government/citizen-commissions/commission-tv)

#### **Anticipated Future Actions/Commitments**

N/A

#### **Intergovernmental Cooperation Opportunities**

Zoning and land use matters are unique to the Village government within the corporate limits of Oak Park and therefore, intergovernmental cooperation opportunities do not exist.