

MEMORANDUM

To: Rose Hill Falls Community Association Homeowners

From: Rose Hill Falls Community Association Board of Directors

Date: May 2, 2018

Re: Update on MCPS Fields Lighting and Artificial Turf Project for Julius West MS

Several homeowners attended the April 2018 meeting of the City of Rockville Planning Commission. Several items were on the agenda but the one of interest to us was last, and lengthy. Unfortunately it did not turn out as well as we had hoped so the Board thought it would be helpful for you all to have a summary. We're likely to have more action on this down the road.

The final outcome was that the application (for artificial turf fields and lights) was approved, along with a directive to City staff to negotiate an MOU with MCPS and Montgomery County regarding mitigation of impact on the neighborhood. The impact is likely to be some light pollution, increased noise and parking in the neighborhood.

The specifications for light claim that the "spillover" will be minimal and residents near similarly-lit fields said that this has been their experience. Fortunately none of the decks on Blaze Climber will have direct sight (the ones that face that way will be blocked by the other row of townhomes) and the ones on Winding Rose that face that way are a long way away (~500') and have tree cover. But noise carries, especially in the cool evenings and there's really no way to mitigate it other than by limiting how late it goes. On that point, though, one of the Commissioners pointed out that the fields are close to I-270 so the crowd noise might not even be noticed.

The parking problem received the most discussion. MSI claims that the intensity of use will not change and that they have been able to successfully manage the parking demand without causing overflow. I am not convinced of this but there is no data with which to refute the claim.

MSI is not the only group to use the field and school facilities. As an example, the school parking lot was three-quarters full Sunday morning (shortly before 10 a.m.) with overflow parking from the church across the street. At other times there is a lot of parking for non-school events in the school building itself. It is quite clear that so far no thought has been given on how

to manage these various groups. So it's important that we monitor, record and report the issues that we notice. We might be pleasantly surprised and find that everything is smooth but we must, appropriately, track the activity and keep records in the event that we need them later.

The Commission was attentive to the concerns about parking and we have a record upon which we can build if problems arise. There's also the separate question of traffic in-and-out and the possibility of backups on Winding Rose Drive of many people waiting to turn right onto Great Falls Rd to get back to I-270. We've seen this on back-to-school nights, for example, and once-a-year is nothing to worry about. But if it starts to be a several-hour thing both Saturday and Sunday then we have a real problem. Let's be alert to that possibility and work to mitigate it if it happens.

Notes/Background:

It is worth noting that the application itself was a "mandatory referral" and that the Planning Commission doesn't have a lot of say in the final outcome. The "deal" was the negotiated outcome of a lawsuit between MSI and the County and apparently that's how the Julius West site was chosen.

MCPS Settles Lawsuit with MSI Soccer, Paving Way for New Artificial Turf Fields at Four Schools, <http://www.bethesdamagazine.com/Bethesda-Beat/Web-2016/MCPS-Settles-Lawsuit-with-MSI-Soccer-Paving-Way-for-New-Turf-Fields-at-Four-Schools/>

Although MSI gets a certain amount of access as part of the deal, it's likely (i.e. "dead certain") that use by other groups will also increase