

**FITCHBURG PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paula Caron, Chair
John DiPasquale
Mike DiPietro
Paul Fontaine, Jr.
Mike Hurley
Laura O’Kane
Andrew Van Hazinga (7)

PLANNING OFFICE: Mike O’Hara

This was a special meeting solely for the continued Public Hearing for the “Game On” Athletic Facility Special Permit & Site Plan Review

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:10 p.m. in the Auditorium at Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School, 1050 Westminster St., Fitchburg.

Ms. Sweeney had submitted her resignation from the Board earlier in the day due to work commitments. Ms. O’Kane had been temporarily appointed by the Mayor as a full member for 30 days, per Sec. 3-7 of the City Code. A second appointment letter to appoint Ms. O’Kane as a full member of the Board has been submitted by the Mayor to the Council for confirmation.

Ms. Caron re-opened the Public Hearing.
Presentation of additional information by the applicants.

Greg Roy, Ducharme & Dillis presented short PowerPoint outlining revisions since last meeting. Architectural renderings of all four sides of building shown.

Lighting plan has been added w/ dimensions of light poles and projected lumens on fields & adjacent properties. Averages 30 lumens across fields. Green line on plan was pointed out. No spillover beyond that point.

Sound study discussed:
Projected sound of crown noise on fields 9 & 10 at rear property line at Victoria Lane equals the ambient noise level.

Traffic:

Sean Kelley, Vanasse Assocs. - Revisions to plan based on comments at the December hearing:

- Industrial Drive & Westminster Hill Rd. intersection will have a thru lane striped for Victoria Lane.
- Right turn lane striped from Industrial Drive to Westminster Hill Rd. Landscaped entry feature at corner will have 3’ x 2’ monument directional sign for Game On facility.
- Easterly intersection of Westminster Hill Rd. & Victoria Lane will be revised to discourage right turns from soccer complex to Victoria Lane.
- Stop sign on Westminster Hill Rd at each intersection with Victoria Lane. Victoria Lane residents will have the right-of-way.
- Stripe Right & Left turn lanes on Industrial Dr. at 2A.

Vanasse’s expanded study included intersection of 2A & 31, a speed study on 2A, sight distance study at 2A & Industrial Drive.

Mr. Hurley: Was study done when school was in session? No.

Atty. Tom Bovenzi, representing applicant, submitted letter dated 1/17/17 outlining applicant's proposed off-site improvements including donation of \$100K towards improvements on Industrial Road & use of fields by Fitchburg schools.

Larry Keegan, Weston & Sampson Engineering had done a third party review of Vanasse Assocs. original Traffic Impact Study and their revised TIS. Vanasse had compared the soccer complex traffic impacts to a similar facility in Connecticut, but went with ITE land use code 488 which had a higher trip generation. He agreed with that approach.

All intersections in the study area are Level of Service "C" or better. In the 2023 "No Build" scenarios all intersections are "C" or better, except 2A & So. Ashburnham Rd. ("E").

In 2023 Build: At p.m. peak, 2A & 31 are LOS "D". 2A & So. Ashb'm Rd. LOS "E" (same as no build)
Sat. midday: 2A & 31 - "D".

Sight distance at Industrial Rd & 2A area OK in both directions. But intersection of 2A & 31 is a sea of pavement. Six accidents - worthy of study.

Weston & Samson's conclusion: Study was well done & they agree w/ conclusions & recommendations.

Qs for traffic consultants?

Discussion about possible improvements at 2A & 31 intersection. Restripe, elephant tracks, rumble strip? Vanasse can look into that.

Mr. DiPietro: At westerly end of Westminster Hill Rd.: Will Roper Road be able to handle traffic? Might be used as a cut-through. Agreed: Traffic should be discouraged from using that as a cut-through to/from soccer complex.

Ms. Caron summarized comments from Police, Water Dept. & Westminster Planning Board.

Board comment:

Ambient noise in study? Was sound study done when Industrial Park was not in operation, noise from 2A.

Mr. Van Hazinga: Should fields 9 & 10 get a sound barrier?

Peter S. Fields 9 & 10 – last game start 9:00 p.m., close by 10:00 p.m. Sound study showed noise from 9 & 10 matched ambient noise.

Restaurant will close by 11:00 p.m. Sat., Sun. close by 7:00 p.m.

They are not planning to reduce # of fields now, but are working with abutters.

Q: Closest point of clearing for fields 9 & 10 to rear PL of lots on Victoria Lane? Approx. 75 feet.

Peter S. – 9 & 10 will be used primarily for tournaments.

Q: Could they build more indoors fields instead? Tough to finance.

Mr. Fontaine suggested if gate at entrance could be opened 1 hour ahead of opening times so vehicles would not queue up at entrance onto Westminster Hill Rd. Victoria Lane, Industrial Rd.

Public comment:

Ms. Caron asked commenters to come up to the podium & use the mic.

Roy Nascimento, No. Central Mass. Chamber of Commerce: Supports project. It will broaden City's tax base. This is part of the City's momentum of encouraging growth & development & becoming more business-friendly. There will be ripple effects of the project that will help local suppliers & residents. He urged the Board to approve.

Pat Lawler, Johnny Appleseed Visitors Center: In 2015 visitors & tourism had a \$127 million impact on North Central Mass. Sports travel is becoming a big draw. They support the Game On project. If not here, then it will go to some other region.

Marcus DiNatale: In Fitchburg 77% of the tax burden relies on residential property. Game On project will add \$8.5 mil. to tax rolls, which means that residential side tax burden could be reduced by \$8.5 mil.

Ray Cosenza, FHS Athletic Director: FHS has four soccer teams but only one soccer field. He supports the Game On project because it will provide the FHS more field space. Game On has agreed to allow use of fields at a great rate.

Mr. Dietrich, 1279 Westminster Hill Rd.: Why was the applicant's sound study on only one part of project – Fields 9 & 10 near Victoria Lane? Inadequate, why not study the noise effects on other side near Westminster Hill Rd. He's concerned with noise from night games. Having games until 10:00 p.m., in a residential area is not right.

Cassandra Cushing, 150 Victoria Lane: Objects to lighting the fields. Lived in a City (Lynn) with five soccer fields, they fought proposed lights & won. Lights at night will ruin the quality of life for residents. They need to get up early for work.

Dave Reid, Monty Tech A.D.: Has lived in Fitchburg for 46 years. Project is good for Fitchburg, but wanted clarification: Game On will allow use of fields by just FHS? Or also other area schools, like Monty Tech, Sizer?

Peter S.: Agreement w/ City on use of fields is just FHS now, but they're willing to talk about it.

John Shea, Lacrosse coach at Monty Tech: They're always looking for practice & playing fields. Game On could be used for early spring indoor practices.

John Labrach (sp.?), E.L. Harvey: Parking area still not fenced in? No.

Harvey is concerned about security of their property, & trespassers cutting through.

Peter S.: They feel no fence needed, 20-foot drop between properties & partly wooded. Game On will have 24 hour security on site.

Harvey's also concerned if there's traffic issues on getting to soccer complex, it may cause problems for trucks accessing their recycling facility.

Q: # of trucks to Harvey? John: approx.150 trips/day counting in & out. They still would like a fence.

Mr. Fontaine suggested making contact info for Game On's security company available to the area residents. Call them first rather than Police.

Peter: They can do that.

Joan Goodwin, Fitchburg Senior Center: Lives on Franklin Rd. near two large condo developments, has experienced impacts of large scale development. She supports project because Game On can provide space for indoor activities for seniors. A large proportion of Fitchburg residents are seniors.

Joseph Fournier, 1264 Westminster Hill Rd.: Lives near proposed fields 7 & 8. Water on his property & in cellar comes from that area. Doesn't want any more runoff onto his property.

Nate LaRose, Recreation Director: This facility will help youth activities in the area. Fitchburg has recently expanded its recreation program, need more fields. Looking to expand to additional activities.

Matt Fournier: Recently purchased 1296 Westminster Hill Rd.: Supports project of this size. Will be good for community. He has played at similar facilities which have been open until 11:00 p.m. He has spoken with design team and his questions have been addressed.

Ms. Caron: Does Board have any questions/comments on issues discussed tonight?
Why no sound study on areas of project other than by fields 9 & 10?

Peter S.: Sound from other fields will be mitigated by earth berm & sound barriers

Hours of operation:

Outdoor fields: M-Th 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. (except fields 9 & 10 over by 10:00 p.m.)
F/Sa/Su 7:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. (fields 9 & 10 over by 10:00 p.m.)

Main Bldg. M-Th 7:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.
Fri/Sa/Su 7:00 a.m. - 1:00 a.m.

Mr. Fontaine: Appearance of other buildings on site?

Applicant: There will be vinyl siding w/ wood appearance.

Mr. DiPietro: Concerned with effect of site traffic on Rt. 2A.

Mr. Hurley: Effect of traffic during times when school buses are going to/from Monty Tech.

Sean Kelley, Vanasse Assocs.: Traffic engineers look at traffic effects of proposed development at the Peak hour on adjacent roads. Peak afternoon hour is 4:15 - 5:15 p.m. The additional traffic generated by Game On is low at that time, so incremental effect is low.

Mr. Hurley: So one field is not going to be eliminated?

Peter S.: They're considering that, but still proposing 10 fields as of now.

Ms. Caron: Does Board feel they have enough information to close hearing or keep it open?

8:05 p.m., Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Van Hazinga) to close public hearing.
Vote 6-1 in favor.

Discussion: Mr. Van Hazinga suggested Board discuss possible conditions. Agreed.
Lengthy discussion about conditions, listed below.

Mr. Hurley suggested install rooftop solar on Main building and offer savings to area residents.

Steve Marsden: Per Mass DPU regulations, solar generation, a utility can't sell solar-generated power to individual residents. Solar generated electricity generally goes back to the grid. Residents could benefit only as part of a Community Solar installation.

Ms. Caron: Does Board feel they're ready to vote?

Mr. Hurley had questions previously but they've been pretty much answered tonight.

Motion made (Mr. Fontaine) & seconded (Mr. Van Hazinga) to approve the Special Permit & Site Plan Review, subject to Conditions below.

Vote 5-2 in favor (Mr. DiPietro & Mr. Hurley opposed). Motion passes with 2/3 vote.

Conditions:

(Traffic related)

- Traffic mitigation as recommended by Vanasse Assocs. (copy from report)
- Install "No Soccer Parking" signs on the portions of Westminster Hill Rd. abutting the project on the east and on the west, and along Victoria Lane.
- At Westminster Hill Rd. near intersection of St. Jude Blvd. install signs "Not a Through Road - No Soccer Access"
- Install stop sign at Westminster Hill Rd. & Roper Road.
- No through traffic allowed on Roper Road.
- Game On to stagger starting times of practices & games in order to ease traffic congestion.
- No construction vehicle access to the site shall be allowed from the east via Westminster Hill Road. The Applicant shall direct their contractors and suppliers to only access the site from the west, via Industrial Road.

- To prevent vehicles from queuing up on Westminster Hill Rd. / Victoria Lane outside the entrance to the Game On facility, gates at entrance to facility shall be opened at least one hour prior to start of operation.
- Applicant's Traffic Engineer to evaluate possible improvements at intersection of Rt. 2A & 31, such as restriping, elephant tracks, rumble strip?
- Coord. Fire & Police Dept. use of gates for emergency access (Knox Box?)

(Site related)

- Hours of operation limited to:
 - Outdoor fields: M-Th 8 a.m. - 11 p.m. (Fields 1, 9 & 10 games will be over by 10:00 p.m.)
Fri/Sa/Su 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. (Fields 9 & 10 10 games will be over by 10:00 p.m.)
 - Main Building: M-Th 7:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m., Fri/Sat/Sun 7:00 a.m. - 1:00 a.m.
- Site security 24/7
- No sand or gravel to be removed from site.
- Any portion of stone walls that are removed from Westminster Hill Rd. or the interior of the site for construction of the project shall be set aside for re-use to supplement landscaping features, roundings at driveways, etc.
- Allow continued public use of the recreational trails throughout site during hours of operation
- Only one well to be installed from irrigation of fields.
- Install site lighting as shown on plan as submitted.

(Noise)

- Sound barriers to be constructed before operation of fields.
- Within the first year of operation, noise generated by facility shall be measured & evaluated by an acoustic engineer to determine if additional noise reductions measure should be taken.

Discussed incorporation of Host Agreement.

Motion made & seconded to adjourn. Vote in favor.
Meeting adjourned: 8:50 p.m.

Next meeting: 1/26/17 (CDBG hearing only)
Next regular meeting 2/14/17