

**The City of Lake Forest**  
**Zoning Board of Appeals**  
**Proceedings of the January 23, 2023 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Zoning Board of Appeals was held on Monday, January 23, 2023 at 6:30 p.m., in Lake Forest, Illinois.

Zoning Board of Appeals members present: Chairman Lisa Nehring and Board members Pete Clemens, James Moorhead, Ari Bass, Laurie Rose, Henry Kleeman

Zoning Board of Appeals members absent: Arthur Miller

Staff present: Michelle Friedrich, Planning Technician and Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

**1. Introduction of Board members and staff, overview of meeting procedures - Chairman Nehring**

Chairman Nehring reviewed the meeting procedures and asked the members of the Board to introduce themselves.

**2. Consideration of the minutes from the November 28, 2022 meeting.**

The minutes of the November 28, 2022 meeting were approved as presented.

**3. Consideration of variances related to proposed improvements to the athletic fields at Deerpath Park, 115 W. Deerpath. Variances are requested to allow a concessions/restroom pavilion, a maintenance building and playground to be located within the setback along the north property line. Variances are also requested to allow backstops and field lighting to exceed permitted heights for fences and accessory structures.**

**Property Owner: The City of Lake Forest**

**Representative: Chuck Myers, Superintendent of Parks and Forestry**

Chairman Nehring introduced the agenda item and asked for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, she swore in all those intending to speak on the petition and invited a presentation.

Mr. Myers reviewed the overall scope of the athletic field improvement project noting that artificial turf will be installed along with amenities including new lights and restroom pavilions. He stated that variances are requested for the buildings, lights, playground and fencing. He stated that the proposed buildings are along the edges of the site to maximize the area available for playing fields. He noted that the larger

building which will provide restrooms, storage space and an open pavilion, is proposed to be located on the north property line. He noted that a smaller building is proposed on the south side of the field in compliance with the zoning setback requirements. He noted that a maintenance building and open storage space is proposed in the northwest corner of the site. He pointed out that the City owns the adjacent parcels to the north on which the Deer Path Middle School and Public Safety Building are located. He stated that the existing parking lots will provide parking for those using the fields. He pointed out the playground, which is proposed just east of the north pavilion, near the north property line, and noted that a variance is requested to allow the playground to be sited as proposed. He noted that the fencing for the backstops at the corners of the field require a height variance. He stated that new field lights are the proposed to replace the existing field lights and require a variance due to the proposed height of the light poles. He stated that currently, there are 22 light poles around the field and noted the due to the advance in lighting technology, only 16 fixtures are proposed, with high efficiency, LED lights. He stated that the new lights will give staff more control over the lights to allow some lights to be turned off if all of the fields are not in use. He stated that as proposed, the light poles are 60, 80 and 90 feet in height. He stated the 90 foot poles are located at the center of the west and east sides of the fields. He noted the 80 foot poles are at the north, center and south sides of the fields and the 60 foot poles are proposed at the four corners of the site, at the baseball fields.

Ms. Czerniak stated that the City Council has endorsed the overall athletic field improvement project. She explained that the Zoning Board of Appeals' role is to consider requests for variances for various aspects of the project as described by Mr. Myers variances from zoning setbacks for the two north buildings and the playground, and height variances for the field lights and fences. She noted that Deerpath Park is owned by the City as are the two adjacent properties to the north, Deer Path Middle School and the Public Safety Building, and the property on which the Recreation Center is located, to the east. She noted that the athletic fields are not visible from the Deerpath streetscape. She noted that the Skokie Drainage Ditch is located on the west side of Deerpath Park the Onwentsia Club is located to the south. She acknowledged that it is unusual to see a request for a variance to allow a building to be constructed on a property line however in this case, since the adjacent property is in common ownership despite the fact that is it a different use, there is some logic to the request. She noted that the over dig will encroach on to the parcel to north during construction. She stated that a maintenance building and outdoor storage area are proposed at the northwest corner of the site, immediately behind the Public Safety Building 33 feet from the north property line. She stated that fencing, up to 25 feet in height is proposed at the four corners of the field to serve as backstops for the baseball fields. She stated that as it moves away from the backstop, the fencing will lower to eight feet in height and will be augmented with netting for safety. She reviewed that the existing lighting on the field will be removed, and new light poles and fixtures installed. She noted that based on available information, the existing lights

are 65 feet tall. She stated that new lights are proposed at 60, 80 and 90 feet. She stated that fewer light poles will be needed. She stated that the athletic fields are an established use, and the intent is to upgrade the conditions on the field to improve playability.

In response to questions from Board member Clemens, Mr. Myers reviewed the proposed locations of the field lights and described the fixtures intended at the top of the poles based on limited information available to date.

In response to questions from Board member Rose, Mr. Myers stated that no study has been conducted at this point on the potential for light spillover. He stated that it is expected that the new lights will create a better overall condition than exists today.

In response to questions from Board member Rose, Ms. Czerniak added that after installation, drop down shields could be installed as determined to be necessary to direct light on to the fields and minimize off site impacts. She added that a lighting reduction plan could be required as a condition of approval of a height variance requiring lights to be turned off when the fields are not in use or shortly after games or practices end.

In response to questions from Board member Kleeman, Mr. Myers confirmed that the fixtures at the top of the 90 foot tall poles will be directed down, not out.

In response to the questions from Board member Kleeman, Ms. Czerniak stated it is not clear whether or not some of the light poles will be visible from the residential properties to the west.

In response to questions from Board member Bass, Mr. Myers reviewed the proposed light pole locations. He reiterated that the tall light poles minimizing the number of poles needed to provide consistent lighting across the fields. He confirmed that the backstops will be rounded at the top.

In response to questions from Board member Moorhead, Mr. Myers stated that he is not aware of any other City properties that have 90 foot light poles.

In response to questions from Board member Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that the Building Review Board will review the proposed buildings and landscaping. She stated that low fencing and landscaping is proposed around the playground. She confirmed that landscape screening is proposed to the south and west of the maintenance building.

In response to questions from Board member Rose, Mr. Myers stated that a five foot black fence is proposed around the playground. He pointed out that a sidewalk is

proposed between the playground and parking lot. He stated that the playground will be designed for two to five year olds.

In response to questions from Board member Rose, Ms. Czerniak added that bollards will be installed between the sidewalk and the parking lot for safety.

In response to questions from Board member Clemens, Mr. Myers stated that he believes that the parking lot lights at the City's Recreation Center are on all night, but the lighting levels are reduced after the building closes.

Board member Clemens suggested that with the lights in the Recreation Center parking lot, the field lights could be turned off after play on the fields ends and before everyone leaves the site.

In response to questions from Chairman Nehring, Mr. Myers stated that currently, there are no plans to add more night games. He confirmed that the proposed lights will be programmed to turn off when they are not needed for activities on the fields.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Nehring invited public testimony. Hearing none, she invited final questions or comments from the Board.

Board member Rose noted that it appears that this project is in a preliminary stage since all the details are not yet available. She stated concern about the lighting as proposed and noted that a study of off site impacts would be helpful. She stated that it is important for the Board to understand if the lighting requirements for the field can be met with lower light poles.

Board member Clemens agreed with Board member Rose's comments on the lighting and that additional information would be helpful.

Board member Moorhead agreed with Board member Rose's comments. He stated support for variances requested for the buildings and for the fencing. He agreed that a lighting study would be helpful in understanding the need for the lights as proposed and the potential off site impact. He stated concern about the 90 foot light poles as proposed. He stated support for the project overall.

Board member Bass agreed with the comments of the other Board members. He also expressed a desire to understand what is driving the proposed height of lights and the effect of using more, shorter light poles. He requested information on the visibility of the light poles from off the site.

Board member Kleeman agreed with the other comments of the other Board members. He stated support for the overall project but noted concerns with the 90 foot height of the poles and lights as proposed. He requested elevations of the poles and fixtures. He stated support for the variances for the buildings and fencing.

Chairman Nehring agreed with the comments of the other Board members and the concerns regarding the lighting as proposed without additional information.

In response to a question from Board member Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that if desired, the Board can proceed with a vote in support of variances for the two buildings and the fencing as requested which will allow some design work to proceed.

Chairman Nehring invited a motion.

Board member Moorhead made a motion to recommend approval of variances to allow:

1. The restroom/open air pavilion to be located on, but not across, the north property line.
2. The playground to be located on, but not across the north property line.
3. The maintenance building, parking lot, and storage yard to be located no closer than 33 feet to the north property line.
4. The fencing at the backstops and adjacent areas to up to 25 feet in height at the four corners of the field.

He stated that the recommendation is based on the findings as detailed in the staff report and noted that the Board's deliberations are incorporated as additional findings. He stated that the motion is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the issuance of permits authorizing work on the site, a detailed site plan with clear dimensions reflecting the setbacks of all structures from property lines shall be submitted for review and will be subject to approval based on a determination that the plan is consistent with the variances granted.
2. At the time of submittal for permit, a plan detailing the area of impact for over dig on the property to the north, in the vicinity of the restroom/concession building and playground, shall be submitted and will be subject to review and approval. It is acknowledged that encroachment on to the adjacent property to the north will be necessary given the planned construction of said improvements up to the property line.
3. At the time of submittal of an application for permit, a construction traffic, staging and contractor parking plan shall be submitted and will be subject to review and approval. At times of the year, it may be necessary for contractors to park off site to avoid conflicts with school traffic.

4. At the time of submittal of an application for permit, a detailed landscape plan shall be submitted demonstrating significant screening of the maintenance building, parking lot, and outdoor storage area with vegetation that is determined by the City's Certified Arborist to have a high likelihood of thriving at each location. In particular, the landscaping should provide significant screening of the utilitarian use from homes located on the west side of the Skokie River.
5. The landscape screening shall be maintained and replaced as necessary on an ongoing basis for the benefit of the homes to the west.

The motion was seconded by Board member Rose and approved by a vote of 6 to 0.

Chairman Nehring invited a motion on the lighting.

Board member Moorhead made a motion to continue consideration of the request for a height variance for the field lighting. He noted that the Board requests that additional information to include a light study, confirmation of the height of the existing poles, information on the feasibility of lower light poles and information on the impact/visibility of the light poles, fixtures, and light on the residential homes to the west.

The motion was seconded by Board member Kleeman and approved by a vote of 6-0.

#### **8. Public testimony on non-agenda items.**

No public testimony was presented to the Board on non-agenda items.

#### **9. Additional information from staff.**

Ms. Friedrich noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 27, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle E. Friedrich  
Planning Technician