

**FITCHBURG PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paula Caron, Chair
John DiPasquale
Mike DiPietro
Paul Fontaine, Jr.
Mike Hurley
Kristin Sweeney
Andrew Van Hazinga
Laura O’Kane, associate member (8)

PLANNING OFFICE: Mike O’Hara

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

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:05 p.m. in the Auditorium at Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School, 1050 Westminster St., Fitchburg.

Ms. Caron introduced Board and briefly described the purpose of the meeting and the role of the Planning Board as the Special Permit Granting Authority. Mike O’Hara gave brief background on how we got to this point: Concept plan of soccer complex submitted six months ago - rezoning petitions submitted to City Council - proposed Commercial Recreation Overlay District comprising seven parcels - Overlay District allows Commercial Recreation by Special Permit from Planning Board - City Council approved Overlay District - underlying ‘Rural Residential’ district remains in place. .

Ms. Caron went over ground rules for hearing: Speakers asked to go up to podium & use microphone so all can heard, be respectful of others, avoid repetition, please limit comments to 3 mins. each.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Special Permit & Site Plan Review - Fitchburg Sports Complex Property Management, LLC,
off Westminster Hill Road

Hearing opened at 6:12 p.m.

Present for applicant: Peter Sangamano, Game On, Mike Eisler, Game On, Atty. Tom Bovenzi, Justin Smith, A-1 Blasting, Sean Kelley, Vanasse Assocs., Steve Marsden, property owner, Greg Roy, P.E., Ducharme & Dillis.

Mike Eisler will be manager of the site. He gave a PowerPoint presentation of Vision & Goals of project: to build a facility for healthier living, work w/ local community & local soccer community.

Massachusetts has the largest youth soccer organization in the country. There is a need for additional field space in Worcester Co. They will work w/ Fitchburg Schools, Monty Tech, and Great Wolf Lodge. Indoor & outdoor fields can be used for soccer, lacrosse, flag football, indoor baseball/softball practice

Mr. Van Hazinga: Can you give examples of similar facilities in area?

None with both with indoor & outdoor fields. This would be the first Game On facility in area. Market area will be Central Mass., southern N.H. & beyond.

Q from Board: How will this be coordinated w/ existing Fitchburg Youth Soccer?

These fields will provide additional field space for FYS; their existing fields could be used for other things.

There will also be youth batting cages, workshops team building activities, possible SAT test center, birthday parties, food, laser tag, etc.

Mr. Hurley: Will Fitchburg High be able to use fields? Yes, at a deep discount or free.
Monty Tech? They've said that they use their own fields.

Greg Roy, Ducharme & Dillis gave PowerPoint presentation on screen at front of Auditorium:

Overview of Facility:

Indoor facility: 100,000 sq. ft., 3 Turf fields, 1 hard surface court, lockers, lounge, restaurant, fitness center, conference rooms and teams/coaches rooms. Mezzanine level in middle of building will have overhang mid-bldg. where parents can view games.

Materials? Bldg. will have metal siding & roof; sides will have fake brick the first 4 feet from ground.

Outdoor fields: 2 natural grass, 8 Turf (all lighted), electronic video boards, no grandstands, concessions, 2-mile loop trail thru site. There will be five full-size, two medium & three smaller fields.

All fields fenced, some fences will be 30 feet high.

Parking

Provided: 382 paved spaces, 245 gravel spaces, total 627. There will be handicap spaces at both the lower & upper lots. Gravel access driveways to all fields for emergency access.

Parking at Mass Youth Soccer fields off Rt. 70 in Lancaster for comparison: Upper lot, plus overflow in the lower lot approx. 400 spaces.

No access from north east from Westminster Hill Rd. Gate at westerly end of Westminster Hill Rd. No turnaround will be installed at end of road. At gate, a Knox Box will be installed for emergency access. Only Police/Fire will be able to access. Security will be at site 24 hrs. / 7 days a week.

Fields 9 & 10 - There will be 200 feet between fence at edge of field to the rear property lines of house lots on Victoria Lane.

Q: Peak numbers of people at soccer tournament? Approx. 500. There will be several separate accessory buildings with rest room facilities. Overhang of main building will have bathrooms and concessions.

Board needs to see renderings of all four sides. They will provide them.

Sewer

No septic system planned; there will be sewer lift station on site.

Water supply

Fitchburg Water Dept. is studying area and updating their hydraulic modelling. At this point they're unsure of which future improvements in area will be done.

Applicants had proposed a booster station but Water Dept. had asked them to not put in a booster station at end of Industrial Road until they study the whole area. Timing of water improvements is issue.

Board discussion:

Could there be off-site improvements (partially) at the expense of the applicant?

Stormwater management:

All runoff from impervious areas (pavement & buildings) will be discharged to underground filtration.

Greg Roy: SWM report including O & M plan details how stormwater will be handled. All fields will be permeable. All will be built with stone layer underneath for drainage. Fields are positioned so as to balance the cuts & fills on site.

Removal of rock onsite will be done by mechanical means, if at all possible.

Blasting

Jeff Smith, A-1 Blasting will be the blasting contractor.

Jeff: If there is any blasting, it is covered by Mass. Statutes & Regulations. They won't come close to the legal limit for vibrations to the ground. Any blasting within 250 feet of houses requires a pre-blast survey & videotape record of existing conditions.

Jeff: Blasting has no effect on wells - they are too deep.

Q: Will there be blasting w/in 250 feet of houses? Unsure at this point. Need to do rock borings.

Erosion Control

Slope stabilization will consist of straw matting & placement of Intermediate erosion control barriers at intervals on the slopes. The side slopes of Field #1 will be rip-rap since too steep to meet 2:1 slope, slope here will be 2:1.5

There will be some stone retaining walls on side of fields. For sound attenuation, there will be some 10-12 foot high wooden sound barriers adjacent to properties on easterly side of Westminster Hill Rd. (Fields 4 & 5)

Site lighting

All ten fields will be lighted w/ LED lights. Specifications will be forwarded to the Board. There will be no off-site spill. Dark-sky design w/ cut-off fixtures. Lighting contractor will be MUSCO. Only the paved parking lot will be lit. The walking paths will have lighted bollards.

Photos of Comparative facilities w/ LED lights with no spillover shown: Lakefront Sports Complex, Emerson Co., Georgia, high school football field, New Milford, Conn. A lighting plan for the Game On site will be submitted.

No P.A. system is planned to be used on playing fields.

Traffic

Sean Kelley, Traffic Engineer with Vanasse Assocs. Presented his Traffic Impact Report.

To compare to existing facilities, they looked at indoor facility in Montville Conn. - 10,000 sq. ft., 4 indoor fields, weekday: 40 trips/hr. Sat. midday: 240 trips/hr. Projected numbers for Game On: Evening peak hour: 177 total trips. Sat. peak hour: 300 total trips.

They studied intersections in area (They are adding Rt. 2A & 31 intersection to the ones that they've studied.) Their conclusion: Industrial Road at 2A will have adequate gaps in traffic on 2A to allow traffic to enter/exit. Low trip #s on 2A, staggered start times to practices/games will help traffic.

Among Vanasse's recommendations:

- No thru traffic on Westminster Hill Rd. westerly to Roper Road.
- Check sight distance at Industrial Road & 2A.
- At Industrial Road & Victoria Lane intersection, propose striping a thru lane straight to Victoria Lane and a right turn lane onto Westminster Hill Rd.
- Stripe Left & Right turn lanes at Industrial Road & 2A.
- Install Stop Sign at Westbound Westminster Hill Rd. (exiting soccer complex) at Victoria Lane.

Other suggestions made:

- Install signs on Victoria Lane "Residents Only – No Soccer Field Parking"
- Steve M. suggested proposing more landscaping, etc. at island at buffer/island at Westminster Hill Rd. at Victoria Lane. Game On entrance sign could go here. Would prevent traffic exiting Game On from turning Right onto Victoria Lane.
- Improve "Montachusett Industrial Park" sign at 2A - Have entirely new sign.
- Rename portion of Westminster Hill Rd. between two ends of Victoria Lane to Industrial Road so Game On has an Industrial Road address.

Q: Hours of operation?

Outdoor fields: 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., but not all 7 days.
Indoor facility hours of operation: 10:00 a.m. - up to 1:00 a.m. weekdays, 7:00 a.m. - midnight/1:00 a.m.
Sat. & Sun.

Field #1 will be 35 feet from edge of clearing to property line, 300 feet to house. Light poles will be 70 feet high.

No smoking to be allowed on site, but it's been suggested to pursue a designated area so smokers don't go off-site into neighborhood.

Where is the solar array proposed on previous plans? It will be proposed, if at all, at a later date.

Board discussion:

What improvements should be made to Westminster Hill Rd. / Industrial Rd.?

Mr. Fontaine suggested overlay of Industrial Road, it's the only off-site improvement he's interested in. There will much more use made of Industrial Rd. We should start off with a road in good condition.

Public Comment:

Ms. Cushing, 150 Victoria Lane wants to retain the peace & quiet in area.

The Traffic Impact Study that compares this to a "soccer facility" is not comparable since it doesn't have as many fields. Is the Montvale, Conn. facility comparable to this one?

Sean: Yes. When 10 soccer fields are peak operation - food & drink are ancillary uses, not a draw to the facility for others not already there for soccer.

Tammy Morin & daughter, 160 Victoria Lane: She built home there because it was quiet & peaceful.

Concerned w/ noise, hours of operation, effect on safety at bus stop & mailboxes in nbhd.

Daughter: If this is built, won't be able to walk dog or ride bike in neighborhood.

Roger Diedrich, 1279 Westminster Hill Rd. - What about Westminster Hill Rd.? (the currently untraveled portion that is a public way) What happens to it?

Mr. Fontaine: The layout of Westminster Hill Rd. won't change. The project will use a portion of the road for access to fields, etc.

Board: Applicant could request that the City abandon a portion of Westminster Hill Road.

Joe Caruso, 151 Victoria Lane: Moved to his house one year ago. Similar facilities he's been to are NOT located near a residential area. Noise from activity and whistles on playing fields really concern him.

Sherry Gardner, 1202 Westminster Hill Road - Concerned w/ change to the natural environment.

Kim Handler, 1296 Westminster Hill Rd. - requested that construction vehicles do not use Westminster Hill Rd. for access to site. Also requests a sound barrier.

Applicant: They will direct their contractors and suppliers to not use the easterly portion of Westminster Hill Road for access.

Steve Marsden: If city abandons / discontinues that portion of Westminster Hill Rd. he can request the GPS services to update their street networks – No access to soccer facility would be possible from Westminster Hill Rd.

Resident of 726 Westminster Hill Rd. - Grew up in area. Concerned about condition of culverts on Industrial Road. They will need to handle any addition runoff coming from site. Also, sidewalks on industrial Road need to be improved.

Michelle St. Cyr, 200 Central Ave. Ext. – Concerned with noise from playing fields and with blasting & the effect on wildlife. They object to the proposed fields located near her house.

Some comments:

- Will there be a MART Shuttle to site?
- Parking lot illumination – should be Dark Sky compliant.
- Intersection of Industrial Road & Rt. 2A – Dark, needs lighting.

Eleanora Lecei, 455 Sheldon Rd. expressed concern about project's effect on wetlands.

Q: How far would sound from fields travel?

Ms. Caron: Look into providing a sound study focusing on Fields 9 & 10.

Peter S. disputed earlier statement that project would be of no benefit to the City. It will be a net gain to city, generating tax revenue with very few city services needed.

They plan to balance the cuts & fills on site rather than trucking excess materials off site. There may need to remove some excess material offsite, but they can state that no gravel will leave the site. It won't turn into a sand and gravel removal operation.

Greg Roy: Approx. 25 acres of the 96 acre site will be developed. Initially they thought that the project triggered a MEPA filing but MEPA office recently told one is not needed.

Ms. Caron: Timeline?

Peter S. - After approvals, there'll be a one year construction period.

Mr. DiPietro: Fields 7&8 - are houses nearby? No.

Q: Wells installed for irrigation? There will be a six-inch well installed for Fields 9 & 10. The yearly water usage of that well will be less than that of 4-R BR house.

Ms. Sweeney: How many fields are necessary in order to make the project work?

Peter S: Ten. Any fewer than 10 fields and the bank won't finance.

Ms. Sweeney: Look at Fields 9 & 10 and impact on neighbors. Applicant has a right to develop property but needs a special permit, so must meet the Board halfway.

Also suggested:

- Install solar panels and supply power to Victoria Lane residents.
- Agreement to allow all area high schools to play one night game a year under the lights at the facility.
- Allow neighbors to use of the facilities at certain times.
- No removal of interior stone walls without need in developing site. Save & use portions of removed stone walls to restore existing stone walls on site where applicable (such as entrance on Westminster Hill Road).

Motion made & seconded to continue hearing to Tuesday, Jan 17, 2017 at same location. Vote in favor.

Meeting adjourned: 9:30 p.m.

Next meeting: 12/20/16

Next 'Game On' hearing: 1/17/17

Minutes approved: 1/10/17