

May 13, 2019

Dear Members of the Board of Education and Dr. Hagerman,

We are writing to express our deep concerns over the timing and process for considering the proposal to install permanent lights on Butler Field. Many of us have offered written and public comments over the past several months on this issue. We have also met several times and exchanged emails with Mr. Pappalardi as we have tried to explain our concerns about the installation of lights, his proposed usage policy, and its impact on the neighbors, as well as student-athletes and their families. This dialogue has resulted in us being able to clarify certain issues and make progress in some areas, while revealing the existence of a number of significant differences that remain unresolved.

Unfortunately, the proposal appears to be on a fast track to become an action item for the Board before all the necessary information has been disclosed that would allow for it to be fully vetted by the neighbors in the area of the field and by the families in the community who will also be affected as practice schedules are shifted or expanded. As a result, there are a number of questions and concerns that have not yet been addressed, but which require thought and research before this proposal should be subject to a vote. The process should be careful and deliberate, not arbitrary and capricious. Issues that should be subject to further consideration include, among others:

Specific Plans and Specs. We have been told that there will be no light spill or glare impacting the neighboring houses, but we have not been given the information to assess this statement. How high will the lights be and where exactly will they be located? Will poles be visible above the tree line?

Mitigation Expenses. The proposal for permanent lights will increase the frequency of the existing noise pollution problem, and also might create light pollution. Mr. Pappalardi proposed a mitigation budget of \$5000 for trees and \$30,000 for a new speaker system. These numbers seem extremely low. We have been given no way to assess whether this amount will be sufficient to address the concerns that have been raised. What is our recourse if problems exist after the lights are installed? Who will pay for any additional mitigation costs that may be warranted?

Future Expenses. Has the District quantified the expenses associated with future maintenance and repairs? Will there be a fund to cover these costs, or will they be funded by the School budget?

Alternatives to Permanent Lights. Have alternatives been explored, such as better temporary lights that perhaps could be powered by electricity rather than diesel fuel? That option would be much less expensive, and also less intrusive. To the extent that the real issue is a field shortage, has the District explored ways to make other fields more available or less susceptible to being closed, thereby reducing the need to overburden Butler Field?

Alternatives to Sound System. Have different types of sound systems been explored? Are there ways to use updated equipment and technology to reduce noise – for example, by placing small speakers in the stands, or allowing spectators to stream on their own phones?

Noise Pollution, Nuisance Law. What does it mean for the District to act as a “good neighbor” to individuals who live near the high school, the middle school, and all five elementary schools? Will the District agree to abide by local law and community expectations on noise pollution? Will the District do an independent study of the noise concerns that already exist, and commit to address them?

Comparison to Other Districts. Mr. Pappalardi provided us and the BOE with some comparative information about lights used in other Districts. That is helpful, but more information and research is required to understand the charts. For example, one of the districts noted as having permanent lights (Byram Hills), does not actually have them. Other districts with lights are not in highly residential neighborhoods. We understand that for districts in residential neighborhoods like ours, permanent lights have been rejected (in the case of Bronxville), extremely limited in use (in the case of Rye) and rarely used (in the case of the New Rochelle lights on the fields closest to neighboring homes.). It is also our understanding, anecdotally from Rye residents, that the strict Rye light policy is not actually enforced in practice, to the frustration of the neighbors. All of these issues need to be thoroughly researched in order to draw any conclusions about the existence of lights in neighboring towns.

Environmental Concerns. The environmental impact of permanent stadium lights has not yet been studied or any study has not been shared if it exists.

Health Issues. We understand and appreciate the health and mental benefits of sports. Has the District also considered the potential for negative health impact of this proposal and the expanded or shifted practice schedule? For example, the impact of stress for athletes trying to balance the increased demands of coaches with their academic obligations and study and sleep schedules? Stress on busy parents and younger siblings, having to get in the car during the week, after dark, after dinner, to pick up kids from practice at 8 pm or games at 9 pm? Noise pollution disturbing residents trying to relax, study/read and sleep? Have the proposed LED lights been evaluated for safety?

Character of the Community. Every Scarsdale resident should be concerned if the District takes the position that it can drastically expand the scope, type and nature of activities conducted on School property in a manner that adversely affect the character of the neighborhood and potentially having an adverse impact on the value of neighboring homes. Similar issues could arise near every school in the district and therefore these policies potentially affect hundreds of households in Scarsdale.

Usage Policy. We agree that adoption of a clear, enforceable, lighting usage policy should be a requirement of any approved plan to proceed with the installation of permanent lights at Butler Field. A number of us have met with Mr. Pappalardi since he disclosed his first draft of a policy at a meeting on April 25. This draft policy was much broader than we had anticipated and was confusing in some places. Collectively, we have spent many hours reviewing the policy,

discussing it, meeting together, and attempting to provide feedback. This resulted in a new draft of a policy being circulated by Mr. Pappalardi on May 9, which we are still in the process of reviewing in order to formulate a response. Although we believe that some progress has been made, significant differences continue to exist and a number of questions remain unanswered. We hope that by continuing the dialogue we will be able to reach agreement. However, we simply need more time.

In short, strong concerns remain over the potential installation of permanent lights. We reiterate our firm objection to this project if it does not include an adequate mitigation plan and/or if it allows for an excessive numbers of loud games and practices, particularly on weekday evenings, as they are disruptive to neighbors and also to families who need to relax at home after a long day of school/work and activities.

Our concerns are furthered by a number of communications we have seen sent by leaders of several Scarsdale youth sport leagues urging parents to attend this meeting and speak out in favor of the lights. These communications indicate that the lights will be available for use beyond that currently proposed by Mr. Pappalardi, suggesting that the lights will “maximize the youth ISO and SHS players’ ability to utilize the turf field,” will be regularly available for practices and games until “8-9pm during weeknights,” and will be used for a wide variety of sports other than football, lacrosse, and soccer, including baseball, softball, and track. Additionally, some of these communications trivialize neighbors’ concerns over noise and student wellness. Examples of statements contained in these communications include: “The kids will be on the field calling for a ball, ‘I’m open!’ Will that carry very far?”; “Plus some kids yelling ‘I got ball’ or ‘Help left’ as they practice is really disturbing people?”; and “Are the same naysayers complaining when it’s summer and the kids are spending too much time running around outside?”

In addition to being divisive and potentially misleading, these statements illustrate the type of pressure that will exist to allow for increased usage of the lights over time after they have been installed.

Each of the issues and questions raised above merits careful consideration so that this project is collaborative and thoughtful, rather than rushed and divisive. In this regard, although we appreciate the efforts of Mr. Pappalardi to hear the concerns of the neighbors, as the District’s Athletic Director he is naturally an advocate for the lights and inclined towards moving this project forward at the earliest time practicable. The installation of permanent lights at Butler Field, however, threatens to irrevocably impact the day-to-day quality of life of residents in the area for a significant portion of the year. As a result, we are less concerned with the timing than with making sure all issues have been fully considered and the right outcome is achieved. As part of this process we would like to hear directly from Dr. Hagerman, and from the members of the Board of Education, and have a thoughtful conversation, about what best serves the interests of the District and its students, as well as the neighbors. Therefore, we urge you to please slow down!

We appreciate your service to the community and your continued willingness to consider our concerns.

Very truly yours (in alphabetical order),

Cheryl Felton and Neville Glajchen, 24 Rectory Lane

Claudine Gecel and Stephen Sabba, 10 Kent Road

Charles and Melissa Hellman, 68 Wayside Lane

Michael and Jennifer Kahan, 25 Rectory Lane

Susan Kohn, 20 Carstensen Road

Janet Korins and Joseph Kaufman, 49 Ogden Road

Jennifer and Jeffrey Lavine, 86 Brite Avenue

Mark and Deidre Michael, 22 Carstensen Road

Lauren and Dan Ornstein, 21 Carstensen Road

Linda Peretz, 18 Rectory Lane

Lei Tang and Cliff Wong, Brambach Road

Eric and Julie Weinstein, 9 Harcourt Road

Mei Zhou, 70 Wayside Lane

Julie Zhu and Yadong Liu, 11 Harcourt Road