

WOLTERS FIELD ADVISORY GROUP MEETING MINUTES
HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS

Thursday, October 20, 2016

Township High School District 113 Administration Building, Board Room, 1040 Park Avenue West, Highland Park, IL

CALL TO ORDER

At 6 p.m., Co-Chair Gordon called the meeting to order. Roll was called.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Co-Chairs Julie Gordon & Michelle Holleman, Advisory Group Members Judith Magel Cohen, Mindy Deutsch, Joel Fontane, John Helander, Scott Liberman, Eileen McMahon, Jon Rowley, & Chief of Police Paul Shafer

Member Absent: Michele Goldstein

It was declared that a quorum was present.

Also Present: Dr. Christopher Dignam/Superintendent of Schools, Township High School District 113
Christine Gonzales/Director of Communications, Township High School District 113
Gale Cerabona/Recorder

Co-Chair Gordon welcomed the Advisory Group and audience members/residents who then introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Member Cohen moved to approve the June 8, 2016, public notice meeting minutes as presented. Co-Chair Holleman seconded the motion.

Voting Yea: Co-Chairs Gordon, Holleman; Members Cohen, Deutsch, Fontane, Helander, Liberman, McMahon, Rowley, Shafer

Voting Nay: None

Co-Chair Gordon declared that the motion passed unanimously. She also stated hard copies of minutes for approval will be available at future meetings.

Co-Chair Gordon explained that she and Councilman Holleman are Co-Chairs and described this meeting's process. She welcomed Christine Gonzales, the new Director of Communications for District 113. It was noted this meeting is being recorded.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

1. *Responsibilities of the Wolters Field Advisory Group*

Co-Chair Gordon advised that Wolters Field is zoned as R-5, which is residential with a Special Use Permit (allows certain things based on the ordinance that sets forth the special uses of that establishment). This zoning is similar to Ravinia Festival.

Co-Chair Gordon explained, as specified in Ordinance 81-13, G5, that the Advisory Group's responsibility is to review the impact on the surrounding neighborhood, if any, of a) the lights; b) sound emanating from the Property and c) vehicular traffic related to Lighted Events at the Property. In conducting such a review, the Advisory Group shall take into account the educational, extracurricular, and psychosocial needs of the District and its students.

An audience member mentioned psychosocial needs was not in the ordinance. Co-Chairs Gordon & Holleman advised this statement was in the current ordinance and is on-line; audience member agreed he did not have the copy.

2. Ordinance 81-13: Special Use Permit Details

The highlight document of Wolters Field Special Use Permit was distributed. Co-Chair Gordon stated this handout is on the web site (and will soon be on the city web sites). She noted the Special Use Permit is the only enforceable document.

Member Helander stated tonight's meeting is a reaction of noise, lights, etc. He noted that two councilman mentioned pulling the Special Use Permit; Mayor Rotering suggested the meeting be earlier, thus today's meeting. Member Helander stated he has not seen progress with the school district abiding by the Special Use Permit. Co-Chairs Holleman and Gordon suggested adhering to tonight's agenda and discussing various concerns in the appropriate section of the agenda.

3. Neighbor Accommodations

Co-Chair Gordon advised a previous concern was turnover at the district resulting in lost history. She noted that a Subcommittee including community representatives, district staff, and the co-chairs had met to discuss the special accommodations that have been made. Co-Chair Gordon stated a discussion has taken place at the District on agreements and accommodations and provided and read a list illustrating the accommodations currently agreed to by the District. She clarified that the district retains the right to make changes based on need, and that the district will communicate any changes with the group.

Member Liberman stated in 2013, the record reflects differently for points 1-5. Co-Chair Gordon responded that the ordinance is being followed as is this list of accommodations. Co-Chair Holleman advised the text in the city ordinance is what the law is. She stated the additions are not things the city can enforce; permits can be enforced.

Member Helander cited an example in Crystal Lake where a law passed based on the laws of the Zoning Code. Member Fontane concurred though stated the representations not in the ordinance cannot be enforced. Member Helander stated the laws in Highland Park don't allow for a hall pass of a weekday game. Member Fontane advised the ordinance modifies the use.

Member Helander indicated various things have been violated. He identified leaf blowers were used before 9 a.m. Co-Chair Gordon agreed it shouldn't have happened but said this was an honest one-time mistake and corrections have been made.

4. *Parking Updates & Issues (including use of Athletic Lane)*

Member Rowley advised there were:

- 4 football games; parking went well (all lots were used as well as Highland Park Country Club)
- 1st home football contest; cars were parked from south to north, instead of the agreed upon north to south order. This was fixed in subsequent games.

Co-Chair Gordon mentioned dustproofing, and that Athletic lane was watered prior to each football game. Security staff is monitoring parking.

Member Liberman observed that patrons are turning around at the end of the block; not a safe situation. Member Cohen stated it appears students are monitoring the cars by sitting in cars and not asking if people are residents. Member Rowley stated he will address this concern with the staff.

It was noted tomorrow night is the last contest. The team is in the playoffs and will be on the road. The weekend of 11/4-5 may include a future game. The Advisory Group wished the team good luck.

5. *Sound System Updates; Sound-Related Topics*

Co-Chair Gordon gave background on comments from one year ago i.e. that warm-up music seemed to be the biggest concern. To mitigate this issue a field-level speaker was purchased, installed, and faces west; significantly reducing sound impact of warm up music on neighbors.

The P.A. system (with speakers facing East) is another issue; Gordon stated the ordinance was not intended to end the speaker (sound) system. Co-Chair Gordon advised that the district strives to create an environment where students, parents and fans receive the best high school experience, complete with thriving extracurricular and athletic events comparable to any other high school. She said that the District does this, however, while working to be respectful of neighbors and working to minimize sound emitted outside of its fields.

Member Cohen stated she appreciates the district being amenable, but notes the sound system is awfully loud. She doesn't believe the speakers should be pointed toward the houses.

Co-Chair Gordon shared that the district has looked at alternatives. As just one example, she mentioned that if a wall was built, our sound experts said the sound to neighbors would be reduced by five-decibel levels.

Co-Chair Gordon agreed this is an ongoing issue. Member Rowley stated neighbors' homes have been used (as a testing ground) for potential solutions. Co-Chair Gordon stated the district continues to work toward a solution.

Member Helander stated there has been lip service in the past; there are still issues; he recommended pointing speakers in a different direction. Member Liberman concurred that solutions are never drawn. He referenced when the bleachers were installed (and mitigating issues); the system is flawed.

Member Rowley advised that various groups have been turned down for specific events, as they are trying to be mindful of neighbors. He cited two scenarios/groups where we modified or eliminated plans to be considerate of neighbors (e.g., Relay for Life, Chicago Cubs rally).

Discussion was also held regarding artificial noisemakers (e.g., vuvuzelas). While these are not illegal under IHSA rules, the district has agreed to disallow usage and will post signs.

An audience member stated it was never a thought that there wouldn't be sound. Member Cohen reiterated there is frustration, and she wants to know specifically what is happening. Co-Chair Gordon stated five settings were tested, volumes were adjusted, etc. Member Helander suggested that neighbors be involved. Co-Chair Holleman stated neighbors have been included, and Member Rowley cited examples when management went to neighbors' homes to witness concerns (noise, etc.).

Another audience member stated he hears there is frustration, and believes the district is working to help the situation. He noted this is not science as then there would be a fixable solution; there needs to be a compromise. He advised he has not been harmed by the concerns.

Another audience member stated there has been a lot of improvement on the sound (regarding football games). He advised he cannot hear the announcer. He shared that the majority of the neighbors love the games; there is a small group who complain.

Given the ongoing level of frustration by both neighbors and the District in trying to resolve the issue of sound from the PA sound system, Co-Chair Gordon and Superintendent Dignam agreed to bring sound experts out prior to the Spring season to do a thorough assessment of sound system alternatives. The Advisory Group will be apprised of the process and results from this study.

6. Neighbor Communications

Co-Chair Gordon advised Christine Gonzales is the new Director of Communications (raising awareness, etc.). It was mentioned that the District has worked hard to improve communications.

An audience member asked if there's a calendar highlighting field events. Co-Chair Gordon advised there is a schedule of HPHS athletic events on the Highland Park High School web site (click on athletics then schedules); practice dates are not illustrated. Another audience member, who moved in prior to the installation of lights, stated the district has been very good about allowing adults and children to use the field.

7. School Bus Parking

Co-Chair Gordon stated busses have been parking at Wolters Field since at least dating back to the 1960s (in fact District 112 used to also park their busses at Wolters). She discussed several accommodations the district has made over the years to mitigate noise, and she reminded the group of the requirement that busses must have back-up alarms. This is an ongoing topic with a goal to mitigate concerns to the extent possible.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Issues Log

Co-Chair Gordon stated the district is starting to manage and document the issues that come up related to Wolters Field. She noted the creation of an issues log is being investigated, and updated information will be shared at the next meeting.

2. Next Regular Meeting – Schedule & Suggested Agenda Topics

Co-Chair Gordon advised the next June meeting date has not yet been scheduled (the months of June & November are documented in the ordinance). Member Liberman stated a meeting after the season is ineffective.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

An audience member stated this group used to meet three times per year. She believes meeting only twice per year is not enough; would like to revert to meeting three times per year (and shorter meetings).

Councilman Holleman noted that this meeting was changed at the request of the neighbors.

ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Gordon adjourned the meeting at 8 p.m.