



## **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

### **LAND USE COMMISSION**

Wednesday, September 27, 2023

7:00 PM

Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, James C. Lytle City Council Chambers

Members Present: George Halik, Kiril Mirintchev, Kristine Westerberg, Jeanne Lindwall, Brian Johnson, Myrna Arevalo, and Matt Rodgers

Members Absent: Max Puchtel and John Hewko

Staff Present: Interim Corporation Counsel Alex Ruggie, Community Development Director Sarah Flax, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner Meagan Jones, and Planning Manager Liz Williams

Presiding Member: Matt Rodgers

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### **Call to Order**

Chair Rodgers opened the meeting at 7:10 PM. A roll call was then done and a quorum was determined to be present.

### **Old Business**

#### **A. Public Hearing: Special Use for a Planned Development | 1501 Central Street | 23PLND-0035**

Northwestern University requests a Special Use for a Planned Development to demolish the existing Ryan Field stadium and ancillary maintenance building to construct a new 116 ft. tall stadium with a 35,000 spectator capacity in the U2 University Athletics Facilities District. The applicant is requesting the following site development allowances: 1) 1,408 total parking spaces (515 on-site, 893 in parking lot within 1,000 ft.) where 4,364 are required for the principal uses on the zoning lot, 2) A landscape strip of less than 35 ft. (specifically, 16 ft. 3 in. at closest point at the north-south and east-west property lines at the northeast corner of the lot) where 35 ft. is required when abutting a residential district, and 3) Open parking area with a 6 ft. 10 in. interior side yard setback where 15 ft. is required. The Land Use Commission is the recommending body for this case and the City Council is the determining body in accordance with Section 6-3-5-8 of the Evanston Zoning Code and Ordinance 92-O-21. PINs: 05-35-310-015-0000, 5-35-310-020-0000, 5-35-318-015-0000, 5-35-310-007-0000, 5-35-310-019-0000, 5-35-310-022-0000 and 5-35-310-008-0000.

**B. Public Hearing: Zoning Text Amendment | U2 University Athletic Facilities District | 23PLND-0010.**

Northwestern University requests a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, Section 6-15-7-2 Permitted Uses, to modify the list of permitted uses in the U2 University Athletics Facilities District and conditions required for public facing concerts. No changes are proposed to the U2 district boundaries. The Land Use Commission is the recommending body for this case and the City Council is the determining body in accordance with Section 6-3-4-6 of the Evanston Zoning Code and Ordinance 92-O-21.

Public Comment

Chair Rodgers noted the order for public comment would be individuals, then specific requests for continuance with organizations presenting first and then individuals. Speakers were then sworn in.

Neil Gambow, 927 Michigan Avenue, spoke in support of the stadium and concerts. He mentioned the Ryan Foundation's promise of a \$10 million Workforce Development Fund and its potential to provide opportunities for Evanston residents.

Susan Barrett-Kelly, 1640 Maple Avenue, spoke in favor of Ryan Field and its resulting support of downtown businesses.

Mike Vasilko, 2728 Reese Avenue, discussed the text amendment and highlighted various passages in the Northwestern University's charter.

Robert Orenstein, 2600 Eastwood Avenue, discussed his perspective on living close to the stadium and considered the presence of such events as an enhancement to his quality of life and the neighborhood's unique atmosphere.

Andrew De Freitas, 115 Third Street, raised concerns about public transportation and shuttle services related to the proposed stadium.

Lara Hamann, 2727 Eastwood Avenue, expressed support for the project and believes that the new stadium will enhance the area and beautify Central Street.

Peter Kelly, 1640 Maple Street, stated his concerns regarding the appraisal report and questioned comments made about the health effects and harm from stadium events.

James Froberg, 1531 Lincoln Street, voiced his opposition to the stadium as a year-round, for-profit venue and objected to the site development allowance which would provide fewer parking spaces than required for the principal uses on the site.

David Cook, 2683 Prairie Avenue, opposed the project and text amendment due to noise, traffic congestion, and pollution.

Timothy Guimond, 2750 Broadway Avenue, expressed skepticism about Northwestern University's economic impact study regarding the proposed stadium and events.

Marianne Hopman, 311 Driftwood Lane, Wilmette, opposed the project due to concerns that it does not meet the Land Use Commission (LUC) standards related to the impact on public services and facilities and she is concerned about the potential traffic congestion and noise levels resulting from the proposed concerts and for-profit events.

Carl Hopman, 311 Driftwood Lane, Wilmette, emphasized the need to obtain an accurate sound study.

Meredith DeCarlo, 1400 block of Lincoln Street, urged the commission to recommend against the zoning change due to its potential disruption to the neighborhood.

Sonia Cohen, 2707 Prairie Avenue, opposed the rezoning of Ryan Field due to concerns about access to Evanston Hospital and the possibility of disruptive noise levels that could affect standards of medical care.

Andrea Smeeton, 128 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Wilmette, read a statement from Deanna Rottenberg who believes that the proposed zoning amendment would negatively impact the residential character of the neighborhood and diminish property values.

David Keown, 2647 Eastwood Avenue, expressed his agreement with the need for a better stadium but disagrees with the proposed rezoning due to funding the stadium through hosting concerts.

Aaron Cohen, 2707 Prairie Avenue, called for a spirit of cooperation and dialogue to find a fair and mutually beneficial solution for all parties involved.

Anusha Kumar, a Northwestern student, urged Northwestern to listen to the Northwestern Accountability Alliance Coalition and negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) in good faith to support Evanston and address historical inequities.

Philip Adams, 206 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Wilmette, opposed Northwestern University's rezoning application not for games but for ongoing concert noise.

Darlene Cannon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward and chair of Evanston's Equity Empowerment Commission, said that the stadium project will not create generational wealth but will instead offer low-level service jobs. She states that NU should establish a skills trade program and support the community in more meaningful ways.

Trisha Connolly, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward and a board member of the Community Alliance for Better Government and member of the Northwestern Accountability Alliance, expressed concerns regarding traffic and transportation related to the proposed project. She also raised questions about access to North Shore Hospital in emergency situations.

Deborah Morrin, 1041 Ridge Avenue, Wilmette, shared her concerns regarding the proposed stadium project and its potential impact on noise and traffic.

Bruce Enenbach, 723 Emerson Street, spoke in opposition to the proposed text amendment for the project asserting that Northwestern University would be in violation of its state charter if it were to proceed with for-profit or non-educational uses of its campus properties. He asked if the commission would vote on the two issues separately or in combination. Chair Rodgers responded that the procedure is to vote on the items separately although they are heard combined.

Noreen Edwards, 1224 Oak Avenue, expressed opposition to Northwestern's plan for concerts at the stadium due to concerns about traffic congestion, noise, pollution, and access to the hospital and fire station.

Dylan Mader expressed support for the redesign of the stadium itself but is opposed to the addition of extra venues around the stadium due to noise concerns.

Sebastian Nalls, 9<sup>th</sup> Ward, expressed concern about Northwestern University engaging in for-profit activities that may disrupt the residential balance of the neighborhood.

Shayna Atkins Davis, small business owner in Evanston, expressed support for the Ryan Field project because of its economic opportunity and sustainability goals.

Jill Greer, 1321 Jenks Street, challenged the necessity of concert revenue for financial viability of the project and suggested exploring alternative funding strategies.

Jeff Dalebroux, 109 Woodbine Avenue, Wilmette, urged the commission to reject the requested zoning change, emphasizing the potential harm to public health and safety in the community.

Michael Nabors, President of the Evanston North Shore NAACP and Senior Pastor of Second Baptist Church, showed support for the Ryan Field project highlighting its potential to create economic opportunities and improve the community's overall well-being.

Ray Friedman, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward, spoke against changing zoning to introduce for-profit concert venues at Ryan Field and expressed concerns about the potential negative community impact.

Janiece Fleming, incoming president for Northwestern University's Black Alumni Association, stated her support for the Ryan Field project highlighting its potential benefits for both the Evanston community and Northwestern University.

Eric Harper, 1620 Jenks Street, conveyed his concern about the potential noise impact on their family posed by the proposed concerts.

Yvi Russell, 1724 Livingston Street, raised questions on the impact on the neighborhood and on the university's history of event management.

Chair Rodges called for a break. The meeting resumed at 9:03 PM with the continuance requests.

Steven Harper, 640 Gregory Avenue, Wilmette, reviewed maps demonstrating that concerts inside the stadium would generate noise pollution beyond Northwestern's property line and argued that the design mitigation elements would not effectively mitigate concert noise as the canopy only covers limited areas. He noted that the distributed sound system is primarily used for football games and not for concerts which typically bring their own sound systems. He said that the sound study assumption of 101 decibels might be too low and low-frequency sounds could disperse further into neighborhoods and should be considered. He mentioned the potential health problems associated with noise pollution. He raised concerns about sensitive sound receivers, such as hospitals, and questioned whether sufficient measures had been taken to minimize noise impact on these areas. He summarized that the Arup Report highlighted gaps in WJHW's information and that WJHW hasn't addressed these gaps adequately. He stated that all materials presented will be provided to the commissioners.

Dan Shapiro, Most Livable City Association (MLCA), Evanston, stated that the text amendment application falls short of demonstrating the need for changing the zoning ordinance to accommodate Northwestern's purposes. He highlighted criticisms of the economic impact study and introduced his team to comment on sound, traffic, and property values. Bill James, Camiros, discussed the impact of the proposal on the surrounding neighborhood and residents. He stated that the proposal would result in a significant change in the neighborhood's function and operation, transforming it from a collegiate athletic facility to a regional destination for commercial entertainment events which is not aligned with the existing planning policies and documents vision for Evanston. He argued that the physical improvements to the facility do not mitigate the parking, traffic and height impacts created by the activities and land use. Andrew Lines, CohnReznick, explained that single-family homes are sensitive to changes in land use. He described Forest Hills Stadium in Queens as a comparable case and presented median sale prices for detached single-family homes located within a couple of blocks of the concert venue compared with similar homes located over half a mile away in the same neighborhood. His study found that proximity to the Forest Hills stadium concerts correlated to measurably lower home values and more time on the market. He also referred to other academic studies on the impact of traffic and noise on property values. Mr. Shapiro then addressed several standards pertaining to the text amendment proposal stating that it is not compatible with the comprehensive plan's goals and objectives. Mr. Shapiro concluded with questions for Northwestern representatives on commercialization efforts in the U2 District, facility leasing, economic impact as it relates to the commission standards, a draft memorandum of understanding, and traffic.

Scott Gingold, 1326 Isabella Street, stated he was previously on the City's Zoning Board of Appeals focused on the change in zoning and the standard related to the City's Comprehensive Plan. He argued that the commercial use of the U2 District is inconsistent with the Plan and would harm the surrounding residential neighborhood. He reviewed historical rejections of Northwestern's attempts to commercialize the U2 District and emphasized the negative impacts, including insufficient parking, traffic congestion, noise violations, and litter. For these reasons, he urged the commission to deny Northwestern's request.

Jeff Cohen, 1514 Judson Avenue, mentioned he is an Economist and criticized both the Tripp-Umbach and Johnson Consulting studies prepared for Northwestern and the City respectively, stating that they cannot be relied upon for an accurate assessment of the economic impact. He stated that the studies fail to measure important factors, including property values, congestion costs, and wear and tear on infrastructure. He further expressed concerns about the studies' reliance on regional effects rather than Evanston-specific economic benefits. He argued that the assumptions and multipliers used in the studies lacked rigor and that they overestimated the project's fiscal impact. Mr. Cohen concluded that a more comprehensive analysis was needed before proceeding with the project.

Fiona McCarthy, 1712 Livingston Street, expressed concerns about the potential impacts of the proposed Ryan Field project on her neighborhood and children. She mentioned that living near the stadium already presented challenges related to traffic and parking, particularly during game days, and highlighted issues such as noise pollution and traffic congestion. She argued that the proposed changes to the stadium's use, including hosting concerts, could fundamentally change the character of the neighborhood and negatively affect the health and well-being of its residents and urged the commission to keep the current zoning.

Dana Hoffman, 1219 Central Street, discussed the impacts of traffic congestion and parking issues during events in the U2 District, specifically focusing on the challenges presented by smaller events that exceed the capacity of the available parking lots. Ken Proskie argued that the applicant's report relied on unrealistic assumptions, resulting in underestimations of parking and shuttle demands. He expressed concerns about the severe shortage of on-site parking and the potential for significant traffic congestion and noise, particularly during event setup and teardown. Ms. Hoffman concluded by urging the committee to consider these negative impacts and vote against the proposal.

Deborah Thiersch, 624 Isabella Street, Wilmette, illustrated ongoing traffic and parking challenges during smaller events in the U2 District with videos and expressed concern about Northwestern's request to host an unlimited number of 10,000-person events, including 7,500-person outdoor events, which could exacerbate existing traffic and parking problems. She questioned the traffic study. She concluded by urging the denial of Northwestern University's request because of the negative impacts affecting both Evanston and Wilmette.



Yvi Russell, 1724 Livingston Street, raised several environmental and construction-related concerns regarding Northwestern University's proposed stadium development. She emphasized the importance of addressing pollution and other environmental impacts. She pointed out potential pollution sources, such as vehicular traffic and stadium demolition and construction, and questioned the lack of specific measures to mitigate these impacts. Ms. Russell called for more comprehensive studies and mitigation measures to address these issues.

Mary Rosinski, 7<sup>th</sup> Ward, discussed the impact of the proposed stadium development on property values and the surrounding neighborhoods. She stated that the stadium's activities would be considered a negative externality, impacting property values due to increased traffic, noise, and congestion. She summarized single-family home sale statistics from the North Shore Multiple Listing Service to address property value claims. Ms. Rosinski concluded by emphasizing the importance of upholding existing zoning and comprehensive plans, highlighting the need to carefully consider the impact of proposed developments on established neighborhoods and the values of the community.

Chair Rodgers briefed that at the upcoming meeting on October 11th, Northwestern University will be allotted 25 minutes to provide their final summation and response to public comments/questions provided then address any questions posed to them by the commissioners. He advised that traffic and noise are the primary issues. There will be no further public testimony. It is anticipated that the commissioners will then deliberate and make their recommendation to the city council that evening.

**Commissioner Westerberg made a Motion to continue hearing Items A and B to the October 11, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Lindwall. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed, 7-0.**

### **Approval of September 6, 2023 and September 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Lindwall made a motion to approve the Land Use Commission meeting minutes from September 6, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Westerberg. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed 7-0.

Commissioner Lindwall made a motion to approve the Land Use Commission meeting minutes from September 13, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Westerberg. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0 with 2 abstentions.

### **Communications**

There was none.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Lindwall motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Westerberg seconded, and the motion carried, 7-0.

Adjourned 11:36 PM.

The next meeting of the Evanston Land Use Commission is a Special Meeting to be held on **Wednesday, October 11, 2023, at 7:00 PM, in the James C. Lytle Council Chambers in the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Amy Ahner, AICP, Planning Consultant

Reviewed by,  
Meagan Jones, AICP, Neighborhood and Land Use Planner