

Denton Planning Commission

Minutes

Town of Denton

February 25, 2025

Planning Commission Members:

William Quick, Chairperson**

David Burroughs, Vice Chairperson*

Kevin Waterman*

Dona Sorce*

James Guay, Alternate*

* Those Present

** Excused

*** Absent

Participants:

Katie Northam, Project Manager

Frank Taylor, Town Councilman

Tim Glass

Jamie Beechey

Travis Breeding

Kyle Bringman

Shane Hansley

Dan Mulford

Alan Kampmeyer

Recording:

Donna Todd, Planning and Codes

Scott Getchell, Town Administrator

PROCEEDINGS

Call to Order:

The Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by Vice Chairperson Burroughs at 6:00 p.m., on February 25, 2025, at the Denton Town Office. Vice Chairperson Burroughs lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

This Meeting was made available to the public via Zoom Video Conferencing, and access to the meeting was made available on the Town website.

Approval of Minutes:

January 28, 2025, the Regular Meeting Minutes were reviewed and unanimously approved with one spelling correction noted on Page 10.

Old Business #1 – Caroline County Commissioners – Sharp Road Park – Minor Site

Plan:

Jamie Beechey, Director of Caroline County Recreation and Parks, (Applicant), and Tim Glass, Lane Engineering LLC, submitted a minor site plan for Lot 3, for the construction of a baseball field, softball field, multi-use field, and parking area for review by the Planning on January 28, 2025. At the January Planning Commission Meeting, a decision was deferred on the minor site plan pending further review of the following items:

- Full Photometric Lighting Plan of the entire area
- Obtaining letters of no objection from adjacent property owners for the Lighting Plan
- Interpretation of the Denton Town Code Lighting Exemptions §128-182.6

Mr. Glass provided the full photometric lighting plan for the Planning Commission as requested. The concerns about the lighting were addressed as the proposed lighting scheme does

not extend to the north or west sides of the property, and the light intensity is within the required limits. The lighting plan demonstrates when the trees are removed from the north and west sides, there is still no light spread. The light spread towards the east extends through approximately half of Choptank Community Health System's lit parking lot. The undeveloped area, Parcel 2292, which is zoned Regional Highway Commercial, experiences a minimal amount of light spread onto their property. This light does not spill over onto the properties to the north.

Vice Chairperson Burroughs inquired about Mr. Glass's definition of light distance versus light shadow.

Mr. Glass clarified that most jurisdictions utilize a footcandle measurement at the property boundary. Denton's light ordinance impose stricter regulations, demanding a 0.1 footcandle within ten feet of an adjacent commercial property line or 0.1 footcandle within five feet of an adjacent residential property line. This measures the intensity of light that extends beyond the luminaire directed downward and can be measured from the ground. At the pitcher's mound, this measurement would equal 32 footcandles.

Mr. Glass submitted a letter of support from Choptank Community Health Systems (Choptank) located on Parcel 2291 adjacent to the ballfields. Choptank has expressed support for offsite parking and lighting for the ballfields. The property to the south, listed as GEM II Real Properties, LLC, has been unreachable, and all available resources have been exhausted in attempting to contact them. Mr. Glass also noted the lighting from this property would have a minimal impact.

Mr. Glass is requesting approval of the minor site plan to construct a baseball field, softball field, and multi-use field. The lighting plan presented includes a waiver for the lighting requirements. The lighting intensity has been reduced from 50/30 to 30/20, decreasing the

luminaires. The light poles have been shortened to minimize light spillage, and the luminaires have been designed with low cutoff and night sky compliance. Extended back shields have been installed to prevent light from encroaching on neighboring properties.

Mr. Glass explained the lights will not be used for more than six months of the year and will be operated manually. Lights will only be used if there is a game after dark and will be manually turned on and off. The lighting will comply with the Town's noise ordinance, which ends at 11:00 p.m.

Mr. Glass also requesting relief from the internal parking lot and landscaping requirements. Twelve trees have been relocated to the outside of the parking lot.

Vice Chairperson Burroughs requested confirmation with Caroline County Parks and Recreation regarding a designated time for the light cutoff.

Ms. Beechey clarified a misunderstanding from the prior Planning Commission Meeting. Denton Little League has an 8:00 p.m. cutoff due to the absence of lights on their fields. With the limited availability of ballfields, these new fields would provide more opportunity to be utilized for games beyond 8:00 p.m. with the use of lights. She expressed a preference for the lights to remain operational beyond 10:00 p.m. to accommodate potential doubleheader games that may exceed anticipated durations. Caroline County is investing \$400,000 in the lights for the fields and intends to utilize the lights for extended periods beyond an hour to maximize the County's investment.

Commissioner Guay sought clarification on who would have control over the lighting system.

Ms. Beechey informed the Commission that the lighting system can be accessed via lock and key with Wi-Fi.

Vice Chairperson Burroughs requested that Mr. Glass address Peter Johnston's review comments regarding the additional trees to be planted along the eastern border.

Mr. Glass responded that the bufferyard is attempting to eliminate one zoning boundary by redefining another. He noted the adjacent properties are RHC (Regional Highway Commercial) and currently lack a buffer. The park layout remains unchanged and would prefer to leave the decision to the Planning Commission regarding whether to implement Mr. Johnston's suggestion to add trees along the eastern side. Mr. Glass expressed a willingness to comply with the decision subject to approval from Caroline County due to additional costs for the trees.

Alan Kampmeyer, an adjacent property owner, expressed concerns regarding the proposed project. He questioned the accuracy of the computer-generated impact assessment and suggested the need for real life measurements. There will be a loss of vegetative buffer due to the Stream Restoration project and the potential negative impact of increased lighting on his property. Mr. Kampmeyer recommended requiring actual measurements from the County for a more accurate assessment and expressed dissatisfaction with the County's handling of the situation and suggested prioritizing the concerns of local residents.

Commissioner Sorce inquired about the possibility of not lighting the softball field.

Travis Breeding, President of Caroline County Commissioners, stated they would like to maximize the use of the complex if the Board approves. He assured the Board that the lights would not pollute Mr. Kampmeyer's property. Mr. Breeding expressed fairness by allowing the softball players to play under the lights and requested that both fields be lit.

Vice Chairperson Burroughs clarified that the field would only be lit during games.

Commissioner Guay asked for an estimate of the duration of lighting during the summer months.

Mr. Breeding informed the Board the lights would be turned on around 8:30 p.m., and a maximum of six Legion games may require lights until 11:00 p.m.

Mr. Breeding discussed the potential use of a new field for Little League and American Legion Baseball games. It is estimated the field would be utilized for approximately 16 games during the summer, with most games concluding by 10:30 p.m. The fields would be used less frequently in the fall, with only one night per week dedicated to Legion games.

Kyle Bringman, President of Denton Little League, estimated the fields would be utilized for approximately 16 games during the summer, with most games concluding by 10:30 p.m.

Commissioner Sorce inquired about the County's ability to provide a schedule for the illumination of the field during games.

Mr. Breeding acknowledged the challenges associated with determining weather conditions and other unforeseen circumstances to provide schedules.

Jane Roberts, an adjacent property owner, expressed her unwavering support for the project. She presented the Board with a petition signed by thirty Town residents who advocate for the installation of lights at Sharp Road Park.

Ms. Roberts and the residents believe the lights would enhance the safety of the community at night. Her property is directly impacted by the proposed project, and she strongly advocates for the installation of lights at the sports fields. She emphasized the dense foliage separating the field from nearby homes provides a sufficient buffer from the lights and sound. She stressed the fields would provide children with an opportunity to engage in sports rather than participating in unsuitable activities.

Mr. Bringman reported a surge in participation, with a total of 281 children participating in baseball and softball in Denton this year. He emphasized the significance of the County's

investment in local facilities and sent Mr. Getchell photographic evidence demonstrating a minimal visual impact on nearby residences due to the existing foliage. The growing number of teams require the need for additional fields. The league has experienced a doubling in size since 2019 and anticipates further expansion. He also highlighted the new rule permitting children aged 4 to 7 to play anywhere, which has resulted in an influx of players from neighboring towns.

Commissioner Guay expressed concern regarding the potential impact of the new rules on the availability of other fields within the County for use.

Mr. Bringman clarified that the League is only permitted to utilize the fields within Town for practices. Away games can be held on other fields within the County.

Shane Hansley, Coach and Coordinator for Denton Little League, provided further clarification regarding the use of the smaller field. He stated it would primarily be utilized for players aged 12 and under, who would not be playing late into the night.

Commissioner Guay inquired about the nature of the fields.

Mr. Bringham clarified that the fields would be grass fields.

Dan Mulford, Commissioner from Preston and President of Caroline County Softball, expressed enthusiasm for the growth of softball and the urgent need for additional field space. He emphasized the significance of providing opportunities for children to participate in evening games.

The Commission reviewed the requests for the internal parking lot and landscaping requirements and the additional trees to be planted on the northeastern border. The Commission is in favor of the relocation of the parking lot trees and encourages the additional trees to be planted on the northeastern border.

Commissioner Waterman motioned to approve the site plan as submitted and finds that the proposed lighting plan for Sharp Road Park Facilities, as presented, demonstrates the park facilities' location and public use along with the limitation on the hours and seasons of operation and the intensity of projected light spillover, considering the existing and permitted uses of adjacent properties constitute unusual circumstances. Additionally, the Commission acknowledges that strictly enforcing the lighting standards outlined in § 128-182.1 would pose significant challenges to the Applicant's ability to provide the intended recreational services. Therefore, the Commission exempts the applicant from the lighting standards in § 128-182 as provided in § 128-182.6 of the Denton Zoning Ordinance and to allow a variance for the trees as requested.

Commissioner Guay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (4:0)

Old Business #2 – Other: None.

New Business #1 –Other: None.

Staff Item #1 – Joint Working Session – March 11, 2025: The Planning Commission is scheduled for a Joint Working Session with the Denton Town Council on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., at the Visitor Center to discuss the Draft Zoning Ordinance.

Staff Item #2 – Public Information Meeting – April 8th: A Public Information Meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., at the Visitor Center to discuss the Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Staff Item #3 – Other: None.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.