

ATTACHMENT B – STAFF ANALYSIS

STAFF PERSON: Rebecca Ragsdale
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: April 17, 2019

PROPOSAL: The applicant requests special exceptions for the replacement of six lighting fixtures on existing light poles at Monticello High School's athletic stadium. Due to a miscommunication associated with the lighting contractor, the lighting has already been installed.

The athletic stadium lighting was initially installed before the County adopted the lighting ordinance (County Code § 18-4.17) in 1998 and is non-conforming. The lighting ordinance does not allow for replacement of non-conforming lighting. The requested special exceptions will bring the lighting into compliance.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA: The property is currently developed with Monticello High School, including three athletic fields with sports lighting. Adjacent properties include residential uses (Willow Lake, Lakeside, and Stone Creek apartments), commercial uses (shopping center), and institutional (Monticello Fire Station, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and Tandem Friends School).

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Resources –

Objective 11: Protect the dark sky of Albemarle County as one of the many natural, scenic, scientific, and cultural resources, for the benefit of residents, visitors, and the larger scientific community

Strategy 11a: Continue to pursue measures to reduce light pollution in the County caused by uplighting, excessive lighting, glare, light trespass, and inconsistent light.

Community Facilities-

Strategy 1b: Give priority to the maintenance and expansion of existing facilities to meet service needs.

Strategy 1g: Ensure that all government facilities conform to County regulations, site development standards, and policies.

Strategy 3e: Provide adequate recreational and athletic facilities on a school site to serve the students of the school and to provide park facilities as identified in the Parks and Recreation Chapter of this Plan.

ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST: Requests for modifications must be reviewed under the criteria established in County Code § 18-33.49(B), taking into consideration the factors, standards, criteria and findings for each request; however no specific finding is required in support of a decision.

County Code § 18-4.17.5 allows the requirement for a full cutoff luminaire to be waived by special exception. County Code § 18-4.17.5(a)(1) and (2) (italicized below) set forth the factors to be considered in reviewing this request:

1. Strict application of the standard would not forward the purposes of this chapter or otherwise serve the public health, safety or welfare, or that alternatives proposed by the owner would satisfy the purposes of these outdoor lighting regulations at least to an equivalent degree.

2. An outdoor luminaire, or system of outdoor luminaires, required for an athletic facility cannot reasonably comply with the standard and provide sufficient illumination of the facility for its safe use, as determined by recommended practices adopted by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America for that type of facility and activity or other evidence if a recommended practice is not applicable. (Amended 10-17-01)

1. Waive the outdoor lighting standards requiring the use of full cutoff luminaires for outdoor lighting at an athletic facility, pursuant to County Code §18-4.17.5.

Lighting systems that both fully comply with the requirement for a full cutoff luminaire and provide sufficient and safe illumination of athletic fields as recommended by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America have become available in recent years – but these lighting systems are significantly more expensive than the proposed Musco LED luminaires.

Even though the proposed Musco LED luminaires do not meet the County's standards for the use of full cutoff luminaires as required by §18-4.17.4.a, the proposed luminaires have been

determined to be a reasonable alternative that would provide adequate lighting levels, reduce spillover, and limit light emitted above the horizontal plane. Musco lighting has been approved at many other athletic facilities located in the County.

The photometric lighting plan provided shows that all footcandle levels around the site and along property boundaries would be in compliance with the spillover standards required by County Code §18-4.17.4.b.1. The Code allows for footcandle levels of up to 0.5 at a property boundary.

2. Modify the maximum permissible height for proposed poles supporting outdoor luminaires at an athletic facility

Light poles are subject to the height limitation of the R15 Zoning district, which allows a maximum height of 65 feet. The existing light poles at Monticello High School are 75 feet and 80 feet tall to provide sufficient and safe illumination of the playing field.

Although the height of the outdoor lighting requires a special exception in order to exceed the maximum permissible height that is otherwise allowed in the R15 zoning district, the proposed outdoor lighting appears to provide for sufficient illumination of the facility for its safe use without creating unacceptable impacts to adjoining properties.

Staff recommends approval of the two requested special exceptions for replacement fixtures on the six existing light poles. Strict application of the standards would not forward the purposes of this chapter or serve public health and safety. The lighting proposed is for an existing athletic facility and is consistent with lighting at many other athletic fields in the County and other recent special exceptions approved for lighting (Peachtree Baseball at Crozet Park).

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Board adopt the attached Resolution (Attachment C) to approve Special Exceptions #1 and #2 with the following conditions:

1. The maximum permissible height of the poles supporting outdoor luminaires at the Monticello High School athletic facility shall be eighty (80) feet.
2. All outdoor lighting shall meet the specifications included on the Illumination Summary sheet provided by Musco Lighting dated December 7, 2018.