

ATTACHMENT B – STAFF ANALYSIS

STAFF PERSON: Rebecca Ragsdale
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: September 4, 2019

PROPOSAL: The applicant requests special exceptions for the installation of eight athletic lighting fixtures at an existing baseball field at The Miller School of Albemarle.

1. Request to waive the outdoor lighting standards requiring the use of full cutoff luminaires for outdoor lighting at an existing athletic facility in County Code § 18-4.17.4(a), pursuant to County Code §18-4.17.5; and
2. Request to modify (increase) the maximum permissible height for poles supporting outdoor luminaires at an athletic facility located in the Rural Areas (RA) zoning district as set forth in County Code § 18-10.4 from thirty-five (35) feet to eighty (80) feet, pursuant to County Code §18-4.17.5.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA: The school was founded in 1878 and is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. The property is also under easement with the Land Trust of Virginia. The property is approximately 1,600 acres in size and is mostly wooded. The school campus area building envelope is approximately 98 acres and centrally located on the parcel. The existing baseball field is located between 1,500-5,000 feet from property lines.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

Chapter 5-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.*

Strategy 2a: *Encourage landowners to pursue voluntary methods of preservation and conservation, including requesting landmark and district designations, offering conservation easements, and providing tax and other financial incentive programs, as outlined in the adopted 2000 Historic Preservation Plan and its updates. Pursue historic district designations in cooperation with the surrounding neighborhoods and in partnership with the City of Charlottesville, where applicable.*

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.

The Musco lighting models proposed are commonly used at athletic fields locally, including at facilities in the County such as Monticello High School. Lighting design has improved such that the poletop luminaire is full cutoff provided it's installed and aimed properly. Athletic fields, including baseball fields, require additional non full cutoff lighting lower on the light pole. 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.

The photometric lighting plan provided shows that all footcandle levels around the edge of the baseball field and parking area 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. The ballfield is located approximately a quarter mile to a mile away from the Miller School property boundaries.

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 RA zoning district, which allows a maximum height of 35 feet. In order to provide safe illumination of the playing field, proposed light poles will range in height from 70' to 80'.

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 RA 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 lighting. 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, Monticello High School).

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 baseball field is eighty (80) feet.
2. All outdoor lighting must meet the specifications included on the Illumination Summary sheet provided by Musco Lighting dated May 2, 2019.