

Watson, David F. - PDR

From: Irene Philips <irenegphilips@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 30, 2021 6:02 PM
To: Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR; Watson, David F. - PDR; rvafirstdistrict@gmail.com
Subject: St. Christopher Special Use Permit Application for 729 St. Christopher's Road

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

As a constituent, I am writing to ask for your support to **deny** the St. Christopher - 729 St. Christopher Road Special Use Permit Application. Commercial 60' to 70' lights do not belong in a residential area. Zoning, recognizing the area as an R-4 single-family residential district, purposefully established Sec. 30-408.7 "No building or structure...shall exceed 35 feet in height". City Planning and City Council is responsible and has a duty to enforce the ordinance and thereby reject the subject application.

Commercial 60' to 70' lights do not belong in a residential area. Cell companies have paid to replace existing poles once they are installed, with larger diameter poles to house cell transmitters/antennas. Zoning requirements for a residential area were purposefully put into place and the 35' height restriction should be enforced.

Neighborhoods surrounding St. Christophers existed prior to the school. St. Christopher leadership supported and was known to enforce student behavior that disrupted community values of a quiet, family-friendly neighborhood.

And, neighbors reciprocated by supporting the students and the school, by overlooking the daily noise, pranks, and inappropriate behavior that comes from a school of all boys. There is a grandfathered expectation of residents being able to enjoy quiet evenings with family and friends.

Comparing St. Christophers to other area high schools with lighted sports fields, for justifying approval of the SUP, is like comparing apples to oranges. St. Christophers is in a residential area completely surrounded by homes and older narrow streets. Trinity Episcopal School, across the river, is the only other high school located in a residential area surrounded by homes and their request to light fields was unsuccessful.

Other local and area schools, with lighted fields, have minimal if any residential impact on homeowners because they are bordered by main roads with property that allows for ample parking lots for school and visiting spectators, they are not set into a residential area with very narrow roads, and there is minimal if any residential on-street parking impact.

- Area high schools are bounded by main roads and commercial property: Huguenot HS is off Forest Hill bordered by an elementary school, Armstrong HS is off Cool Lane bordered by Interstate 64, Thomas Jefferson HS is off Malvern (4 lanes) bordered by commercial property.
- Local high schools: Freeman is off Three Chopt bordered by commercial property, Tucker is off Parham bordered by commercial property, and the old defunct Westhampton school is off Patterson bordered by commercial property.

The only people who will benefit by approving the SUP are the handful of men whose priority in life is Friday night football and who have donated school funds tied to the installation of lights, but do not live near the school and do not care about families that do live here. There are options. They can do what Benedictine and St. Catherine's did and purchase land in the county for their athletic fields; or install lights at the zone appropriate 35' height.

You and City Council have to decide if the short term experience of a night event to entertain a few (non-residents) takes priority over the safety, health, and well being of permanent long-term families living in an established residential neighborhood well known for being a quiet, safe, and family environment.

5915 Kensington Avenue
Irene Philips

Sent from my iPad

Watson, David F. - PDR

From: Cathy O'Neil <ckoneil3@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 20, 2021 11:33 AM
To: rvafirstdistrict@gmail.com; Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR; Watson, David F. - PDR
Subject: St. Christophers Special Use Permit Application for 729 St. Christopher Road

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

As a constituent, I am writing to ask for your support to deny the St. Christopher - 729 St. Christopher Road Special Use Permit (SUP) Application because it is the role of our elected officials to assure City of Richmond residents can live in a community that is safe and provides a healthful environment for young and old.

I am a resident of the Clubview neighborhood and I live adjacent to the St. Christopher's fields included in the SUP. Historically, the neighborhoods surrounding St. Christopher's existed prior to St. Christopher's school. The expectation has been and continues to be that, as a private school for boys, its footprint would not negatively impact residents' quality of life. Residents reciprocated and supported the school, the noise, and inappropriate behavior by students and visitors. There is a grandfathered expectation of residents being able to enjoy quiet evenings with family and friends.

Trinity Episcopal School is located just south of St. Christopher's School and is surrounded by neighborhoods, similar to St. Christophers. Trinity's attempt to light the fields was unsuccessful and St. Christophers request should also be denied. There are many examples of acceptable use of lighted high schools; three local examples are Tucker, Freeman, and the old Westhampton school, all have minimal if any residential impact because they are bordered by main roads with property that allows for ample parking lots, they are not set into a residential area with very narrow roads, and have minimal if any residential on-street parking impact. The proposed request for lighting of fields increases light pollution, and does not enrich the neighborhood.

Lighting St. Christophers fields will increase traffic and spectators and will negatively impact residents and emergency workers responding to traffic and parking violations, and accidents; and city staff responding to light, noise, and zoning violations.

Installation of lights on the fields will have a negative impact on all surrounding neighborhoods because it does not align with the context or scale of the area. Sporting events, recreational use for concerts and parties, such as Homecoming and Alumni reunions, are disruptive late-night activities that: 1. creates excessive noise, 2. increases light pollution, 3. creates safety concerns for homeowners, with strangers entering private property, 4. eliminates basic privacy needs, 5, increases traffic congestion - cars currently back up and drive on yards to make 3-point turns because roads are impassable, and 6. makes it impossible for a homeowner to come home and park relatively close to their home. Restriction of emergency vehicles on non-passable roads is a safety concern.

The St. Christopher SUP does not enrich the neighborhood and is a lose-lose for residents living next to school property. The only people that will benefit are the handful that have donated funds to install the lights, but do not live near the school.

Commercial 60' to 70' lights do not belong in a residential area. Cell companies have paid to replace existing poles once they are installed, with larger diameter poles to house cell transmitters/antennas. Zoning requirements for a residential area were purposefully put into place and the 35' height restriction should be enforced.

Other concerns with the proposed lighting project:

- installation of lights will cause light pollution and have known health concerns disrupting sleep and having harmful impact on children with ADHD and autism, and elderly with dementia
- continuous noise throughout the school day and extended until 10PM disrupts normal family time; and the constant exposure to the noise can negatively impact young and old spectators and residents adjacent to the fields and provides individuals, young and old, no respite from the noise
- night games will be against local rivals with attendance expected to be significantly greater than day games. Current events against these same teams already draw a large crowd.

- St. Christophers removed the buffer that existed between the school and homes, which has already increased noise from the fields. Lighting the field becomes a safety issue for residents adjacent to the field because visiting teams use the north side of the field, where homes line the school property. Spectators have no respect for residents' fences and walk through private property, they lean against fences yelling, partying, littering, invading our privacy and creating safety issues - strangers coming onto our private property in the dark with loud noise covering up theft and break-ins. Especially concerning for a homeowner who happens to go away and their house becomes a target.

You and City Council have to decide if the short term experience of a night event to entertain a few takes priority over the safety, health, and well being of permanent long-term families living in an established residential neighborhood.

Catharine O'Neil
5921 Kensington Ave

Sent from my iPad

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL TO: Matthew.Ebinger@Richmondgov.com

October 18, 2021

Hi Matthew,

RE: Special Use Permit Application – 729 St. Christopher’s Road

It is with great dismay, I write to express opposition to St. Christopher’s (STC) SUP and to share the impact the proposed changes will have on students, faculty, parents, and adjacent neighborhoods. And, request City Planning and other approving City agencies make evidence-based decisions, consulting with their engineers, subject matter experts and/or independent specialists, and medical/scientific specialists on compliance with glare levels; the long-term and short-term harmful effects associated with glare emitted by LEDs; the negative health impact of noise and light has on babies, children, adults and elders; and the long-term and short-term effect of RF waves emitted from cellular devices in a residential area. Lighting of the STC football field is nothing new to neighbors or STC. However, past STC leadership acknowledged the negative impact and disruption lights would bring to the community at large and did not pursue it.

In the STC August 2021 informational meeting, STC stated the project was only being considered because “it is funded by individuals for who this is a passion and this really is their passion.” “A small number of individuals and families have wanted this, dreamed of this... that’s the only way we would do something like this.” When asked about setting limits as to when lights would be turned on, STC replied “it will be up to the administration”. The same administration that will not be impacted by the light and noise.

Also noteworthy, STC leadership nor the passionate few families funding a project to light up the STC fields do NOT live in adjacent homes or surrounding neighborhoods. Even the Head Master, who lives in school provided housing, is quick to leave for his County residence. Ironically, the project excludes lighting school fields and tennis courts adjacent to the Head Master’s residence.

As a parent of a STC alum, it is disappointing that STC is letting the passion of a few dictate a change that impacts every STC family and does not align with the Strategic Plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is indicative of white privilege – not considering the greater good, instead pursuing a goal for a select few. It is the same ‘select’ approach STC took for a ‘beautification’ project.

As a resident living adjacent to the field, there is no buffer zone between the properties. I felt compelled to write after hearing neighbors’ concerns, doing research, and reading the STC SUP. Moving was the telltale comment by a STC athlete’s parent, “What’s wrong with Saturday football?” Again, shows a lack of inclusion or disregard of the opinions of non-donors.

The STC SUP intentionally:

1. skirts the adverse effects on environmental (noise and light), health (mental and physical), safety, aesthetics, and property valuations
2. excludes issues identified during the St. Christopher’s informational meeting held August 2021

3. does not articulate specifics related to the use which STC would need to commit to abide by. Selectively stating “*expected* to be football... which would be limited to 5 per year.” In an attempt to minimize use of the field, without addressing the extended use.
4. changed event start time to be later, going from 6PM to 7PM
5. includes expanded use to include: recreation, St. Catherine’s, and permitting wireless a/k/a cellular facilities on the light poles, none mentioned in the August 2021 meeting. I believe the last reference is to cellular devices, since a facility is not going to fit on a pole
6. excluded a 3,000 sq’ building

Numerous government and medical studies and articles document the negative side effects of light and noise on young and old. Scientific debates recognize potential health and environment effects associated with intense lighting and glare; for example, sleep deprivation, messing with melatonin, stress, hearing, and vision. Conversely, research does not identify a positive correlation to the health and well-being on individuals. (Organization studies include but are not limited to: American Medical Association (AMA), National Institute of Health (NIH), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Sleep Foundation. Night lighting standards to avoid health issues by not exceeding recommended levels (one stating LED lights should not be used in night lighting) include: International Commission on Illumination, American Institute of Biological Sciences, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)).

EPA Clean Air Act Title IV – Noise Pollution – defines noise pollution as “unwanted or disturbing sound... interferes with normal activities such as sleeping, conversation, or disrupts or diminishes one’s quality of life.” “...exposure to constant or high levels of noise can cause countless adverse health effects.”

Below are some of the concerns that neighbors would like to call out:

Environmental

- Increases and contributes to noise from high frequency sound systems, vehicles, noisemakers (e.g., bells, drums, whistles), music, and crowd noise during events and flowing out into adjacent neighborhoods as they exit events
- Increases and contributes to light pollution created by commercial field lighting, a 3K sq’ building; in addition to the lighted walkways, parking lots, and buildings
- Exposure to RF waves from cell devices transmitting at greater-intensity 24x7; and continuous device noise that will become an intrusive part of the soundscape, when attached to light poles
- The above is in addition to existing and constant HVAC noise and unnecessary lighting of field signage and the interior of buildings

Safety, aesthetics, and general welfare of the community

- Property identified in the SUP is in use 7 days a week. Perpetuating use of the fields with lights and extended noise interferes with the expectation for normalcy and a quality of life within one’s home. Prolonged exposure can lead to sleep deprivation and be:
 - disorienting for elderly; more so on dementia patients
 - disrupting for anyone who works late and/or families with toddlers
 - a contributor to depression, lack of focus, bad behavior, unhealthy over eating

- STC counted 362 parking spots on school property, which is insufficient for a day game. The expectation is there will be significantly more people attending an evening event.
- Additional congestion will exacerbate illegal parking, cars getting side-swiped, speeding, accidents, noise, litter, property damage.
- Congestion and illegal parking on side streets blocking emergency vehicle access, especially when there are residents in their 80s and a 90 year old, create an avoidable risk.
- Mental health is a growing problem in high schools. Extending an already long school day further, for young growing adolescents is not good and concerning as a parent. Down time/family time is critical to boys to escape the constant online pressures of peers, academics, and social media. It is 2021, students' mental health needs to be a priority.
- As a parent of an alum, many students/athletes live in the county and start their day at 6AM. Students already have long days and don't get home until after 6PM often 8PM or 9PM. Extending the school day will further reduce much needed down time/family time to rest and relax to combat fatigue and to avoid stress and burnout.
- Distracted and impaired driving. Many of the student athletes who will be staying later for practices and games will be new, inexperienced drivers. Driving after a 16 hour day while tired impairs judgement and reaction time. Most think they can safely text and drive. Educators should be removing potentially dangerous behaviors and not increasing the likelihood of them by extending the school day and driving late and tired.
- Competitions will be limited to local, historically rival schools such as, Benedictine, Collegiate, Trinity, Woodberry Forest, where even day time attendance draws a very large crowd. The same teams that have had fights breakout at events held during the day. The latter three schools having fields that do NOT have homes immediately adjacent to their fields, and do NOT have lighted fields.
- STC stated they will step up security using STC enhanced security staff and/or the Richmond Police Department; require faculty and staff to work a Friday night game to monitor the boys; and hire RMC Events. Hiring RMC Events cannot create more parking spaces and the added security does not address issues that will flow out and into the neighborhoods e.g., fights, underage drinking, side-swiping of cars, noise, and more. STC is acknowledging that they are knowingly creating a problematic environment and preemptively attempting to mitigate them. I strongly urge City decision makers to Google - Friday night football fight. The results will speak for themselves.
- Based on the scientific/technical uncertainty surrounding the installation of extraordinarily intense lights on a field and the potential impact on the population – has evidence been provided to show there are no harmful effects? Have independent specialists reviewed the evidence and with certainty document there are no health or environmental risks?
- The STC campus is no longer an asset to adjacent neighborhoods aesthetics when its use becomes a nuisance and does not add value to either the school community or neighborhoods. Providing no respite from noise and lights, creates fatigue and is mentally, physically, and environmentally unhealthy.
- The STC campus becomes a detriment to surrounding properties, lowering property value and real estate taxes with:
 - Installation of lights referred to as 'high crime lights'

- adverse health affect and visual impact of a dozen 60' to 70' light poles in an established dark, quiet residential area with no buffer between the lights and adjacent homes
- a marked change in a life-long expectation of residents about peace, quiet, and visual harmony after dark
- Night athletic/recreational events with a propensity for fights and bad behavior; along with unknown property damage and crime that comes with it

To be fully transparent, for 100 years residents and STC developed and enjoyed the benefits of a strong and committed relationship. In 2019 STC leadership created an environment of distrust when, without any notice decided to decimate the woods across from the football field (what once provided a buffer between the properties). At the request of the Board of Governors, there was a meeting with residents to share details of a 'beautification' project that included grass and landscaping; however there was no follow through. 'Beautification' was limited to property adjacent to select home owners.

Demographics for residents living adjacent to the fields vary with seniors in their 80s, young families with babies and elementary age children, middle aged, and newlyweds, all of whom enjoy athletic competitions, fans enthusiastic support and cheers for their school, students and the many school activities... during daylight hours. Folks do not complain about the daily nuisances that come with living next to a school, and they could. Blasting music, playing inappropriate songs with children and elders around, field signage lighting (early pre-phase of field lights) that lights up a master bedroom, spectator trash blowing onto property, cutting through private property with fences, no parking when returning home with groceries, runners training on the track as early as 5:30AM to 6AM yelling and screaming.

The daily sound and excitement of students during the day is minimally intrusive and enjoyed by residents young and old. However extending that time to pre-dawn and late evening will be harmful, and provide little to no respite from never ending noise. What once may have been considered annoying noise will become constant and unbearable noise, impact sleep and provoke anxiety, stress, and irritability and be prejudicial to residents health.

Disrupting the quality of life of neighborhood residents is a lot to ask for the sake of high school athletics. Does the pleasure of a few individuals with a dream and passion for night athletic events, who do not reside in the affected area, outweigh the harm inflicted to families, children and elders that do reside in the affected area? If night athletic competitions are a passion and priority for a family, there are many schools they could choose from to get that experience.

Saturday (day) athletic events will provide a healthy and safe environment for the much needed adolescent physical activity, athletic competition, fun, enthusiasm, as well as a place to socially gather, without compromising health and safety.

I strongly urge all members of approving agencies to ensure the safety and health of the City of Richmond and its residents. Consider the facts, remain steadfast and not waiver by pressure or promises to later 'fix' anything that is problematic. It is more effective to avoid public health and environmental risks; instead of trying to enforce a fix for a hazardous safety, health, or environment condition after the fact, and to have to absorb litigation costs. It should be clear the harm associated with the SUP far outweighs the fun factor of a night game and thereby deny the SUP.

Thank you for your time and attention to the disposition of the STC SUP. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there are any questions.

Regards,

Carolyn Masterson

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Teen Driving – Saturday, October 16, 2021

St. Christopher's vs. Woodberry Forest Football Game

Please limit distribution to maintain privacy. This is meant as an example of why there should be concerns for tired teen drivers. On a walk to the shopping center shortly after the game started, at the corner of Maple & Patterson a young girl hit a car with a family, parents and young children. No one was hurt. The young girl was hysterical and got a ticket. Proponents for night athletic events think concerns with teen driving is exaggerated.









Everyone plays a role in being responsible for our environment. As a role model to future generations, St. Christopher's should take this responsibility seriously and lead the way for showing students how everyone's actions can either contribute to create a better environment or continue to harm our environment.

