

Letters, Emails and a Petition

“IN OPPOSITION”

Of the requested variances

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Val DiEuliis <valdieuliis@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, March 12, 2017 8:19 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward2
Subject: Proposed Variances for Linwood School

To: BZA Committee and Staff

From: Val DiEuliis
1033 Fairmount Ave.
St. Paul, 55105

Re: 2 proposed variances for Linwood located at 1023 Osceola Ave.

I urge you to deny the two variances requested by the SPPS for the expansion of the Linwood school.

The Land Use Issue

First and foremost, I understand that you must determine whether SPPS has met its burden to prove that its request for these two variances meet each and every one of the six criteria specified by law and prominently posted on your web page. In other words, I understand that the issue in dispute here is a land use issue and should be evaluated using the six clear and explicit standards set forth in the criteria for variances.

SPPS argues that it needs to move the 4th grade from the Monroe school, a much larger school campus of two full city blocks, to the proposed expanded Linwood School. This leads them to argue that the variances are required to allow for space and facilities for the newly expanded school population. (Currently, Linwood School handles K-3, the proposed population will be Pre-K through 4, an addition of approximately 150 students.) In addition, SPPS argues that it needs the two variances at issue, in order to upgrade the school to ADA standards (an upgrade that should have been completed approximately 22 years ago), add a cafeteria, add new mechanical systems, and increase the size of its class rooms, among other things.

The reasons for the variances proffered by SPPS are based on their own educational policy decision to move the 4th grade to Linwood school. During the hearing on February 13, SPPS argued that even if the 4th grade were not moved, the variances would be required to accommodate the new cafeteria, ADA upgrades, and so forth. This just cannot be true. Regarding this point, the people of the Linwood neighborhood, which include two architects, offered alternatives that would accommodate the new cafeteria, ADA upgrades, and so forth without the need for these extreme height and footprint variances. SPPS refused to work with us, and refused to consider keeping the 4th grade at Monroe. This refusal is more evidence that the SPPS has created its own land use problem with its policy decisions. If these variances are denied, the neighborhood would be open and happy to work with SPPS to determine a design that would satisfy both parties.

The neighbors of Linwood object to this oversized expansion of the Linwood school, which, at 60 feet in height with reduced setback on the Oxford Street side, will dwarf all surrounding buildings in the neighborhood (including apartment buildings). In addition, the expanded footprint, which leads to the reduced setback variances, will destroy almost 50% of the contiguous outdoor play space on the north side of the school.

I live directly across the street from the playground and I see all of the children out there during recess. They fill the place up with their running, playing ball, and, in winter, rolling giant snowballs. After this expansion, not only will these children be deprived of almost half of their needed play space, but there will be almost 150 more children vying for half the current space. It does not seem fair to me that these children will be deprived in this way.

SPPS has created its own problem with the Linwood site and seeks to remedy its problem by arguing that it needs these variances to implement its decision on educational policy. This is an irrelevant argument: land use is at issue, not educational policy.

The Issues of Race and Equity

The SPPS has implemented a strategy to make racial equity the central issue in this matter. The school system, through the parents and parent-teacher organizations, and even with one of its vice-principals leading the charge, has for many months characterized the people of the Linwood neighborhood as racist, privileged, elite, rich people who do not want minority children in the Linwood school. At the hearing on February 13th, SPPS presented a Linwood vice-principal who was almost out of control with his rage at the neighbors. Several parents of minority children also spoke at the hearing and described having opinions that the neighborhood people do not want them at Linwood. Nothing could be further from the truth. I can only imagine where these people got these misplaced ideas that promulgate a strategy of hate and fear. Let us not forget that the diverse population at Linwood school already exists. The neighborhood welcomes everyone, a fact that appears to be lost in this morass of hate mongering

Finally, SPPS brought several speakers from the NAACP to argue in favor of the expansion as a racial inclusion issue. Although I have no qualms with the NAACP in general, the NAACP representatives did not provide a reasonable case to help the SPPS prove it has met its burden vis-à-vis the six criteria required for these specific variances.

Racial equity, inclusion, and/or exclusion, although important societal issues, are not at issue in this specific dispute. The strategy of using a racially-based attack and the accusations and insinuations of the SPPS, its staff, parents, and the NAACP concerning my neighbors, whom I know to be good, caring, and inclusive people, is a red herring and should be rejected.

In closing, I ask you again to deny the two variances at issue for 1023 Osceola Avenue. The denial of these variances will provide an opportunity for SPPS and the neighborhood to work together to find a reasonable solution to the problem of upgrading the school.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

Val DiEuliis
1033 Fairmount Avenue

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Merrill Aldrich <merrillaldrich@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 7:22 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: I oppose the proposed Linwood school design

Good morning Sean,

I am writing to express deep concerns with the proposed design for the school on Osceola Avenue. I have followed the progression of the design and looked at the building, and heard the valid complaints of parents and teachers that the current building is lacking in key features that students need. So what I have to say comes in two parts:

1. I'm a parent with kids in Saint Paul public schools, and a whole-hearted supporter of public schools. My parents are retired public school teachers. I'm also obviously a taxpayer. I would gladly support a sensible, well thought out and reasonable renovation to this building to enhance the students' experience there. It's absolutely vital.

2. However, the issue I have is specifically with the design and programming that is proposed in this project. Rather than addressing just the real deficiencies in the building, which could be done with a reasonable budget, on the current site, without Zoning variance, this proposal insists on bringing more students on to what I have read is one of the smallest properties in the whole school system. It's only for that reason that the building has to become unreasonably large and exceed the various zoning limitations.

This doesn't make sense financially, it's not in the best interest of the students, but - most importantly - it doesn't meet the threshold of zoning variance wherein the owner of a property can't create their own problem and then ask for a variance to fix it. The school system has many other sites and many other ways to solve all the challenges with Linwood; they just seem to refuse to pursue those other options.

I believe we ought to use the zoning rules as they were intended, to force the school system to reconsider a plan that is simply too large for the site, and entirely unnecessary given their options at other properties they already have.

Respectfully,

Merrill Aldrich, 1053 Linwood Ave, St. Paul

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Emily McMahon <emilynooney@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2017 8:08 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Emily McMahon
Subject: Opposition to Linwood school

Hello ,

First, thank you in advance for your time and thoughtful consideration.

I am a parent of a child who will be starting at Randolph Heights in the fall. I am also a neighbor of the Linwood School. I request that the zoning variance request for the proposed Linwood Lower school (Osceola Avenue) be denied

The current and future students of Linwood School (in any form) deserve more. They deserve a fully ADA compliant school building with sufficient indoor and outdoor space for the number of children. The indoor space should be comfortable and designed for the appropriate usage and number of students. The outdoor space should also be comfortable and designed for the appropriate usage and number of children. The children of an Arts magnet deserve to have indoor facilities to perform and practice. They also need to have outdoor space to perform and practice.

I have not had time to delve deep into the details of this expansion plan but as a parent and neighbor hearing that the outdoor space will be reduced saddens me. When I happen by the school on a normal day the school children use and fill the current outdoor space, to reduce it would be a mistake that can't be undone.

Thank you for serving the public and please consider denying the variance and ensuring that the SPPS provides all children with access to high quality environments.

Emily McMahon
(510) 866-8536

FILL
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Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: David Wagner <dwagner@salaarc.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 12:04 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: 1023 Osceola
Attachments: BZA Letter RE- 1023 Osceola.docx

Dear Mr. Westenhofer,

Please deliver my attached letter to the members of the BZA and enter this letter into the public record in opposition to the proposed major variances at 1023 Osceola Avenue.

I am a resident at 1049 Linwood Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105.

Thank you,

David Wagner, AIA, LEED AP



SALA ARCHITECTS

DAVID O'BRIEN WAGNER AIA, PRINCIPAL | T 612.379.3037 | dwagner@salaarc.com

FILE
16-06784

February 12, 2017

Dear Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals,

I am writing to you with my opposition to, and serious concerns with, the Saint Paul Public Schools Major Variance Application for 1023 Osceola Avenue. This property sits kitty-corner to my own house at 1049 Linwood Avenue, and the proposed project will have serious visual, traffic, open space, and historic character impacts to not only my home, but to the dozens of residences in the direct visual vicinity, as well as to the larger Summit Hill neighborhood and residents.

In reading the recently created BZA Staff Report, I have found significant issues with the report including items A, B and C, with the Findings 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, with the statement G. Correspondence, and with item H. Staff Recommendation.

Below are my specific comments to the effect of each of these items:

A. PURPOSE

The report's stated purpose of the variance, while for construction of an addition, should also clearly indicate that there is no deficiency in the property that requires granting of these variance requests. It is clear that the Saint Paul Public Schools' desire to create space for 165 more students at this campus is their sole reason for asking for variances. **All of the other improvements** for ADA accessibility, for upgraded classrooms, and for the new cafeteria separate from the gym, **can be achieved without variances.**

While the variance application expresses the variance is for 17 feet, the staff report should note that the rules for measurement do not account for the fact that the true building height measured to the visual parapet is actually over 52 feet relative to the surrounding grade.

B. SITE AREA AND CONDITIONS:

The site area and conditions description is grossly misleading. Below is a more accurate account of the immediate conditions:

Directly to the west are two single-family residences on Oxford as well as a low-rise [15' high], low-income multi-household apartment building. Additionally the backyard views of 6 more residences are directly affected to the west for families on the south side of Fairmount between Oxford and Lexington.

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Directly to the south are 7 single-family residences with direct visual impact plus the two [25' high] apartment buildings, each with multiple tenants visually impacted by the proposed expansion.

To the southwest are three more residences directly visually impacted by the school, including my house, which looks out to the school from four bedrooms and from our kitchen.

On a conservative count to the north and east over 25 homes are *directly* impacted by this proposal.

The total number of homes impacted should be stated based upon the 350 foot radius required by major variance notification standards. I'd like to know what this number is, and I think it should be provided to the members of the BZA.

C. BACKGROUND:

Saint Paul Public Schools has stated publicly that their FMP, an internally generated programming document, is the reason they are expanding enrollment at the Linwood property. By all zoning review standards it is clear that the variance request is driven only by their internal decision making, programming, and planning, and therefore the variance requests are not related to any specific limitations inherent to the property.

The improvements of designing for modern standards, learning needs, and ADA accessibility are not in and of themselves deficiencies of the property. Such a modern facility can be built, or the existing building remodeled without necessitating variances to the zoning ordinances. Expanded enrollment is the desired outcome requiring variances. Given the broad opportunity to utilize properties and resources across the district, and to purchase or not sell existing properties, SPPS is on their own, solely responsible for creating this condition.

It is clear that SPPS planning is limited to one decade, ten years, of planning. Their request while serving them for perhaps ten years, means a lifetime of impact on the neighborhood and surrounding residential homes.

E. FINDINGS:

1. *The variances are in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code.*

In reviewing this finding, it appears the only standard that addresses the condition of **harmony** relates to the applicant desiring a better learning environment allowing similar-aged peer groups together in one building. As I see there is nothing about the property that limits pre-k through 4th grade from existing at this property if SPPS so chose to do so. **It is only the desired increase in the number of students [at the smallest property in the**

district] that creates a problem. Again, this is not an inherent deficiency in the property.

In my understanding of zoning, **the question of harmony is not just an applicant consideration, but also needs to be reviewed, in fact primarily needs to be reviewed from the standpoint of impact upon the surrounding property owners, and what is in harmony with their structures and neighborhood.** From this point of view the staff report and the applicant are silent.

Chapter 2.4 of the Comprehensive Plan is cited by the staff report, noting that the plan encourages the development of a strategy for investing in a broad range of infrastructure projects that support the growth of schools. True, investing in schools is important, but what else does the Comprehensive Plan say? According the staff report, apparently nothing else matters. Again staff and the applicant are silent about the impact on the neighborhood and individual property owners, and what the Comprehensive Plan has to say about that, for instance:

- The Comprehensive Plan supports the Summit Hill District 16 Neighborhood Plan
- The Summit Hill Plan Section 5.1 states “Neighborhood ambience is defined and enriched by a well-maintained green urban landscape..., and well-designed new and old buildings that reflect the character, mass and scale of nearby buildings.” Given that the majority of surrounding homes and apartment buildings are 25 in height, the proposed 47 feet of the applicant’s plan, right up to the west setback, would dwarf the surrounding neighbors.
- Section 5.2 states that there “must be better enforcement of current zoning and building guidelines”. Everyone should be held to the same standards with city entities not getting a free pass.
- Sections 5.3 through 5.6 advocate for “retention of neighborhood green spaces, such as parks, vegetated bluff areas, and undeveloped portions of properties”, “enhance use of existing public spaces and parks”
- The resulting loss of green space, access to light and view, and increased hardcover beyond what is allowed by zoning will be a significant impact on this local neighborhood.
- The playground is a community asset and is proposed to be cut by 40% in size. This impacts the residents as well as the students who will have a sub-standard playground that does not meet Minnesota Department of Education guidelines for outdoor playspace.
- The proposed expansion decreases open space, and decreases the beauty and harmony of the neighborhood.

2. *The variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan*

The staff report refers to the part of the Comprehensive Plan recognizing that economic sustainability is driven by quality schools. The staff report is silent about the economic impact to the surrounding residences who will have their property values damaged by an oversized addition to this school versus an addition that is in keeping with zoning standards.

Unlike most other schools located within neighborhoods, there is not open enrollment for neighborhood children for the Linwood Elementary site. Our neighborhood children do not get to go to Linwood since it draws students only from across the District as an arts magnet. Typical economic benefit, does not apply to the neighbors surrounding Linwood. Again the staff report is silent on this point.

The staff report states that “the request to construct a building addition *large enough and tall enough* to accommodate *additional students*” is consistent with the vision of the Comprehensive Plan. **A better learning environment can be had for Linwood, and is strongly supported by the neighbors.** For the small size of the Linwood property additional students are a planning wish forced by broader decisions within the SPPS and their 10 year plan. What happens in 10 years as enrollment numbers drop [as they are projected to do], program plans change, and the desires of parents and administrators shift? We will be saddled with an oversized and potentially under-utilized building for the next 50 to 100 years. Again the staff report is silent, and does not reference other parts of the Comprehensive Plan that show this project is not consistent with its vision.

3. Once again, it is a desire to shift 165 students to this smallest of district sites that is the only salient issue surrounding the variance request. **All of the educational standards, stated program needs, updates, ADA accessibility laws, cafeteria updates, separate performance spaces, can be met with a building addition that meets all the zoning ordinances.**

There are no practical difficulties that are not of the applicant’s own making. The staff finding stating that conditions have been met are once again looked at only from the perspective of the applicant.

In fact, given other available properties under ownership by SPPS, it is wholly possible to construct an addition to such locations as their 5 acre [compared to Linwood’s 1.8 acres] Albion property 1.5 miles away, and which is currently for sale by SPPS. Tom Parent from SPPS stated that this option would be too expensive, but my understanding is that economic considerations “alone do not constitute practical difficulties”. Who knows what other development possibilities are out

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there to consider. **It is my understanding that no other solutions have been explored with any real reports or fact-finding.**

4. *The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.*

The applicant has clearly created their own need with their proposed design. Currently this property functions as a school, and has for close to 100 years in this general configuration and within zoning ordinances. All of their modern educational needs can be met with additions and updates that conform with the zoning ordinances.

Cramming an additional 165 spots at the smallest school site in the district does not constitute a circumstance that is unique to this property. Common sense clearly shows this condition has not been met.

6. *The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.*

The staff report breezes over this critical section of the findings. The character of the neighborhood, the overshadowing scale of this addition, its proximity to setback lines, and its overwhelming height in comparison to all the surrounding single family residences, these issues have been ignored.

Apart from the inappropriate scale of this proposal, there will also be a loss of sunlight to surrounding properties, loss of open space, loss of historic viewsheds [please note that neither the HPC nor the SHPO acknowledged this important historic landscape issue in their reports and recommendations], a significant increase to traffic and congestion, an increase in site hardcover, and a loss of recreation space critical to nearby residents.

Yet again, this report has utterly failed to even mention the impacts imparted to the surrounding residents. Apparently even though the city feels it is important to notify residents about significant variance requests within a 350 foot radius of a proposed project, it seems to feel that recognizing the concerns of said residents, even though they have been very vocal, does not need to be covered at all in the staff report.

Not one sentence in this report has acknowledged the surrounding residents and their legitimate opposition to this project as it has been currently planned. Not one sentence has been devoted to the fact that the neighborhood wholeheartedly supports and encourages the improvements to the school that are needed to bring it into modern

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compliance with standards. Not one sentence mentions that if the current student body size at this school was maintained at current numbers that none of these improvements would necessitate a variance.

G. CORRESPONDENCE:

It should be noted that of the 163 signatures in opposition to this variance request, all are residents in the Summit Hill District, with names and addresses provided. These signatures were the result of real residents talking with one another about the concerns of their neighborhood.

In contrast the 1100 petition signatures of support have come via an online petition promoted by websites such as the SPFT. This petition does not have any controls based on residency in the neighborhood, or even residency in the city of Saint Paul. To my knowledge no addresses have been provided for the signators to this petition. Such lack of information and transparency brings the validity of this petition into serious question.

This staff report does not address such questions and concerns.

I earnestly hope that the esteemed members of the Board of Zoning Appeals will weigh the clear deficiencies present in both the SPPS application and with the staff report, and will vote to deny the application for Major Variances. Such a denial will be an appropriate step in bringing the SPPS staff to the table with the Summit Hill Association and concerned residents. Such consideration for the serious impacts of this proposed project on the surrounding neighbors, will allow for a new and collaborative proposal to come forward that adequately addresses the zoning ordinances while promoting the much needed improvements to the Linwood Elementary School.

Sincerely,

David O'Brien Wagner, AIA, LEED AP
1049 Linwood Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55105

420

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Dan Grundmeier <dan@grund-meier.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2017 6:06 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward2; cyndi grundmeier
Subject: 1023 Osceola Variance request

Sean,

I am a neighbor that would be effected by the proposed expansion of the Linwood Monroe lower campus.

My family has lived in our home near the school for 22 years, all 3 of our children attended Linwood at 1023 Osceola and our youngest attended Linwood during the expansion to dual campus. So, he has attended both campuses.

I am against approving these variances. Mainly as it is unnecessary in size. I do not opposed that improvements and some expansion is needed and would be beneficial to the students.

But, I have seen no reason for such a large expansion and reduction on the outdoor space the students and the neighborhood currently enjoy.

The school district argues that the need to move 4th grade back from the Upper Campus to the lower campus, but I've seen no data on why this is so beneficial. They also state that their program is so successful (which I've personally witnessed), so why such a change for 4th grade, if they are so successful.

The district is also still without permanent leadership as the search for Superintendent is on going. New leadership may dictate an entirely new direction.

Regards,
Dan Grundmeier
1000 Fairmount Avenue
612-805-7447

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16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Timothy Lynch <TIMJLYNCH@msn.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2017 2:29 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

Dear Mr. Westenhofer,

I write in regards to the variance requests for 1023 Osceola

I am opposed to the granting of a variance to the Saint Paul School Systems for their proposed work on this site. Simply and basically the school did not meet the criteria to grant the variance, anything else is, and should be disregarded. It is a poor spot for a major renovation and one that the school district did NOT do it's homework on; the continual references they make to how the neighborhood has made it better with their proposals illustrates that point.

Given time to reflect and look at their other options they will come to realize that building a large addition on the smallest of school lots is not effective in the long run. I happily live across from the school now but do not look forward to living across from another empty school site like Galtier in 5 years, although that only took two years to become vacant.

Additional plans which will garner all of the criteria the city is looking for (ADA, separate gym and cafeteria, etc.) have already been provided to the city and dismissed without consideration, again another highlight as to why they do not qualify for a variance request. The best thing for the students, neighbors and the City of Saint Paul is a correctly sized, well-equipped school with plenty of open space for its students.

With regards,

Tim Lynch

1011 Fairmount

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Cynthia Truitt Lynch <Cynthiatruittlynch@msn.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2017 10:52 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward2
Subject: 1023 Osceola Ave.

Dear Mr. Westenhofer,

St Paul Public Schools has put forth a variance application. In order to grant two variance requests, the proposal by the school needs to meet many of the criteria espoused by St. Paul. No doubt you are already familiar with these, and I have listed the most relevant ones to this application below.

While I am in full agreement and applaud the school's plan to add a cafeteria, comply with ADA, add a heating system and generally upgrade and modernize the building, something that should have been done and could have been done already, the plans still shows a clear reduction of outdoor space, which does not meet the Minnesota Department of Education guidelines for playgrounds. Expanding the building at the expense of an undersized lot gives up land needed for the well being of the school children.

Additionally, this proposal is in direction opposition to the Summit Hill plan, which destroys a natural amenity and does not reflect the mass and scale of nearby buildings. This proposal degrades community/institutional partnerships. Furthermore this variance request **does not treat Linwood students equitably**.

Diminishing outdoor space means less large-scale play opportunities. It reduces large motor skill running activities, and takes away precious possibilities where children may be boisterous, yelling in jubilation over a child-developed game. This winter I observed the happy squeals of Linwood students rolling giant snowballs across an open field unencumbered. The current revised plan does not give these young students room to do these things. This cannot be done on playground equipment, and the Youth sport court being proposed does not meet the criteria of the fourth grade students they wish to add to the school with the large out of scale building addition. I enjoy having a school across the street from where I live. I benefit from hearing their happy squeals at recess and at other times of the day, but these children also deserve a school that's outdoor facilities are right sized for the population and size of the children.

Please, consider that the success of a school requires the commitment of quality educators, updated buildings, but *also* the over-looked hidden classroom of green space. The great outdoors allows children the ability to weave their imagination without regard to noise or mess often restricted in a classroom. It gives adults the freedom to sit and chat with children in an unstructured way, and allows for observation of peer-to-peer conversation and negotiation. I sincerely ask the school board, SPPS staff and all stakeholders to reflect on what is lost if the building expands beyond current code requirements. Outdoor green space is a classroom unto itself. Success of our children does not just happen within a building; it is hinged on providing exceptional open space too.

Thanks so much for your time,

Cynthia Truitt Lynch

Neighbor

CRITERIA 1- "The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code." CRITERIA 3 – "The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision and that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision, economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties." CRITERIA 4 – "The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner." CRITERIA 6 - The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Michelle Gilats <mich6475@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 11, 2017 12:20 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward2
Subject: Concern about Linwood school plan

Hello,
I am writing to express my concern about the current plan for the Linwood school and green space. As a resident of the neighborhood, I am concerned about eliminating/significantly reducing the green space available to us, given that there is such a scarcity in our area to begin with. I have two kids and this space is the closest park to our house. I fully acknowledge that kids need more space in schools as well, but they also need outdoor spaces. It seems like there could be more of a compromise than the current plan.
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Michelle Gilats
1060 Lincoln Ave

Sent from my iPhone

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Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Irene Pruzan <irene-pruzan@juno.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 11, 2017 11:18 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward2
Subject: Linwood School Zoning Variance Request

Mr. Westenhofer and Rebecca Noecker:

The St. Paul School board is presenting this proposed addition to the Linwood School as a minor change and is requesting a zoning variance to allow it. However they are attempting to turn a small neighborhood school into a major city school by significantly increasing the square footage and adding a new building on a parcel of land and a neighborhood that can not accommodate it.

The additional traffic would be more than the neighborhood can manage. They are proposing to load numerous buses on two narrow side street. The parking lot which is listed now as 6 spots they are proposing to increase by very few spaces. Where are the other teachers, administrators, support staff and parents supposed to park their cars? Clearly this is way too large a project for the space if they cannot find adequate parking on the property. The school board should be searching for an alternate site for this much larger school.

In the 40 years that I have owned property at 1042 Fairmount at the corner of Oxford, the neighborhood has maintained its historic character and is now in the Historic Hill District Area. Personally my property value will plummet with a 3 story school located across the street on Oxford. I'm assuming that quite a few homes will lose value and with the loss of property value, the property tax base will also decline. As we know even if only a few square blocks of houses decrease in value, so the rest of the neighborhood will likely follow. This could have a significant negative impact on not only city resources and property owners, but the St. Paul School system budget as well.

Thank you for your consideration.

Irene Pruzan
Owner
1042-44 Fairmount Avenue
Corner of Oxford

Getting Long Eye Lashes - Here's How
Making Beauty Effortless
<http://thirdpartyoffers.juno.com/TGL3141/589f4732d193a4732268bst04duc>

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16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Shayne Blacksborg <saynenayne@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 11, 2017 9:44 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: I Oppose The Linwood Monroe School Variance

I Oppose the 1023 Osceola Ave School Variance for the following reasons:

The problem is not about updating the school- the problem is about expanding the school: SPPS has decided to bring in 3 Pre-K and 3 Fourth Grade classes, or about 135-195 kids, to the lower campus of Linwood Monroe Arts Plus, which has the smallest acreage of any SPPS elementary school.

The open space is already the smallest of all SPPS elementary schools - decreasing this space to build a new expansion only exacerbates existing inequities. For example, the neighborhood school for the Linwood neighbors is Randolph Heights. To compare the inequity: Randolph Heights' 469 students currently have approximately 11,600 sq. ft. of wood chipped playground space, 10,400 sq. ft. of hard court space, 38,700 sq. ft. of open field space, and 46,000 sq. ft. of lawn - for a total of 106,700sq. ft. The proposed 435-495 LMAP students will have approximately 9,200 sq. ft. of wood chipped playground space/s, 2,000 sq. ft. of hard court space, 8,200 sq. ft. of open field space, and 3,000 sq. ft. of lawn that totals 22,400sq. ft. Think that through- about the same amount of kids, but LMAP kids get about 20% of what the Randolph Heights kids get. When the children get separated from their friends in later grades, there will not be enough outdoor play space for them to reunite during recess. In addition, after the proposed construction, what is left of the main open space will be in perpetual shade during the school year. No direct sunshine on our kids during long Minnesota winters.

There are other flaws, too. Currently SPPS Pre-K is only a half-day program. Which means per class, 20 students in the morning and 20 students in the afternoon. How do these 120 matriculate into just 75 Kindergarten spaces? SPPS must trust that a large majority of these Pre-K students would attend another elementary school. Which begs the question: why are we jamming all these kids into this small campus, when acres of space exist at other locations that these families will shift to after one year anyway?

This proposed project is not about ADA updates and student equity. If it were, they could renovate the existing building, add a much needed cafeteria and even add additional classroom spaces without having to exceed Zoning Law requirements. If it were, they would give LMAP kids the same amount of outdoor space that every other SPPS kid gets.

Thank you,

Shayne Blacksborg
1052 Fairmount Ave

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Jason Goldberg <jsgoldbe@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2017 11:39 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward2
Subject: 1023 Osceola Ave. (Linwood) variances

Mr. Westenhofer and BZA members:

Please register my strong objection to the requested variances for the SPPS project at 1023 Osceola Ave.

The variances requested are a direct result of actions within the control of SPPS. The school is attempting to increase enrollment in a facility that is located on the smallest parcel of land for any of the schools in the district. This alone is sufficient reason to deny the variance application.

In addition, SPPS has not explored alternatives that would not require variances. Similarly, they have ignored the pleas of neighbors and the surrounding community, including the recommendation of the SHA district board to deny the variances. The project, as proposed would be a significant degradation to the entire neighborhood and quality of life in the vicinity of the school.

Finally, and most troubling, is the disingenuous and dishonest behavior of the SPPS representatives. They have repeatedly made false claims about the plans, the supposed lack of alternatives (patently false), the need for increased enrollment on site (a problem of their own making), and encouraged claims of racism and classism against a community that is nearly united against the project in its current form.

Sincerely,
Jason Goldberg, Ph.D.
1052 Fairmount Ave.

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 7:31 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Crippen, Debbie (CI-StPaul); Benner II, Jerome (CI-StPaul)
Subject: FW: Linwood Variance

From: Natalie Hopfield [mailto:njhopfield@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2017 11:19 AM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul) <yaya.diatta@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward2 <Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Linwood Variance

I am writing to express my opposition to approving the variances for Linwood School expansion. I support the school making improvements to provide better facility to the current student levels but not to crowd the lot and the neighborhood with such a large and tall building. Having addition students will also increase the traffic in the surrounding blocks.

I urge you not to grant the variances for this project as there are better St Paul school sites for an expansion, including the Monroe campus.

Thank you.
Natalie Hopfield
1027 Fairmount Ave
St Paul MN 55105

--

Natalie Hopfield

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Cheri Kedrowski <cheri@usa35.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 7:47 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: 1023 Osceola
Attachments: LNF Opposition Document - Final.pdf

Hi Sean,

I just received a copy of your staff report for the 1023 Osceola property. I am a near neighbor of the property. My family has used the Linwood school grounds ("Linwood Park") extensively since my eldest child was born 14 years ago. In recent years, the Linwood Park has become increasingly important. As their bodies have grown larger, so has my children's need for a larger space to run around. We live in a neighborhood with small yards and fenced properties, and my children go to the Linwood Park approximately 3-4 times per week in the warmer months to play soccer with neighborhood children. I am opposed to the expansion of the Linwood School and the removal of the large field because it will destroy a critical asset to my family and the neighborhood. Post-expansion, the remaining green space will not be large enough for field sports. There is no question that with the expansion of the Linwood School, my children will spend less time outdoors, less time exercising, and less time building friendships and community with their peers in the neighborhood.

Because of the importance of the Linwood Park, I have been tracking the activities regarding the proposed variances. I received a copy of the 1023 Osceola staff report over the weekend, and I was stunned by your conclusion that the applicant meets the requirements for the variance. I had not previously submitted comments to you because the failure of the property to meet the requirements for the variance was a certain conclusion based on the variance code. Please see the attached document that clearly documents that the proposed variances do not meet the zoning code. (Though slight changes have been made to the development plans since this document was written, the core logic is still applicable.) What I don't understand about the staff report is how it considers alignment with only Chapter 2.4 of the Comprehensive Plan without regard to other provisions of the Comprehensive Plan that are in clear misalignment with the variance application. Likewise, as this variance is needed solely because of a discretionary programming decision by the landowner, I do not understand the staff conclusion that the plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.

In the midst of all the ugly politics that have emerged regarding this variance application, I have always had comfort in the fact that the law itself was on the side of denying the variances. I am planning to attend the BZA to express my concerns. Moving forward, I encourage you to consider the entire code and to uphold your responsibility to neutrally review the variance application.

Respectfully,
Cheri Kedrowski
1043 Goodrich Ave

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 7:30 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul); Crippen, Debbie (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Benner II, Jerome (CI-StPaul)
Subject: FW: Linwood School variances

From: Todd Wichman [mailto:todd.wichman@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2017 1:34 PM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul) <yaya.diatta@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Subject: Linwood School variances

Attn: Sean Westenhofer and Yaya Diatta,

I am writing as a neighbor to register my vote **against** granting the variances. I agree with the issues cited by the SHA ZLU committee and see no reason why SPPS cannot move forward with a project that does not require variances. The building expansion not only creates an excess of impervious surface (against City zoning code) and requires a variance, so does the building height.

Specifically, these variances cannot move forward as it cannot be reasonably found that *"The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner."* Indeed the landowner has created their OWN plight by planning a project that requires variances and does NOT comply with the SHA Neighborhood Plan. The fact that the zoning district (R4) does not have criteria regarding lot coverages and building heights for a school use notwithstanding.

As an owner of a historic house built on a very sensitive limestone foundation, I am concerned also about the potential for additional structural cracking and stress resulting from added bus traffic on Osceola. I live on a block that is **cobblestone**, which enhances the vibration, cracking and structural issues. The SPPS proposal to reduce bus traffic by splitting traffic between Monroe and Linwood can only be regarded as a temporary solution, not regulated by the City for the addition of future traffic and impacts in the future.

I ask that the BZA find these variance requests to be a negative precedent setting example in regard to the historic building, site **and** neighborhood, request that the BZA deny them, and send the SPPS project at Linwood School back to the drawing boards to be resolved with a solution that is acceptable to all.

Please support the SHA District 16 Council in finding that this project, in its current form, does not benefit the neighborhood. While I support the modernization of SPPS properties to meet the needs of their students, **please hold them accountable to the City's zoning requirements as written without variances**.

Regards,
Todd Wichman
870 Osceola

431

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Lynn Solvang <lynnsolv1062@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 8:47 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Opposition to Linwood expansion

Mr. Westenhofer,

As a neighbor of the Linwood School (1 block away), I am opposed to the proposed expansion of the Linwood School. I believe it is too big for the lot it sits on and it is not in keeping with the character of our neighborhood. I have serious concerns about the increased traffic that will result from the considerable increase in the number of students enrolled in the school. I believe it will make our neighborhood less walkable and less safe for my younger children. Please consider these concerns as decisions are made.

Sincerely,

Lynn Solvang (1062 Linwood Ave)

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Ruth Lippin <RuthLippin@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 8:59 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood School

Mr. Westenhofer,

It seems strange to me that just when research on children and learning is showing that what children need is more time outdoors running and playing and discovering, that the St. Paul Schools want to cover over more of the outdoors at Linwood School. Less play space is counterproductive to both the children in school and those in the neighborhood. Why not look for an underused building or a building that is currently not in use to refurbish?

Ruth M. Lippin
1057 Linwood Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: John O'Brien <john@commodoresquashclub.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 9:07 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood School Variances

Hello Mr. Westenhofer,

I oppose the variances, as I like the scale and scope of the school, and how it fits into the neighborhood.

Thank you,

John O'Brien

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Harry Walsh <harrywalsh375@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 9:11 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood School

I oppose these variants.

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Sara Stedman <stedmansara@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 9:29 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood School Variance

Dear Mr. Westenhofer,

As a long time neighbor of Linwood School, living 3 doors away for 33 years, I am opposed to the granting of variances for the Linwood School addition. As planned it is too big for the site. The need for the variances is caused by the School's decision to increase programming at the school on a plot of land that will not support it. It will be detrimental to the neighborhood, being too tall and too big and too much increased traffic for a residential area.

The process was botched from the beginning and rather than working with the neighborhood on a compromise for the needed improvements the SPPS has chosen to move ahead with no meaningful changes as to size and scope.

I urge you to deny the request.

Sincerely,

Sara Stedman

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Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Laura O'Brien Smith <o_brien_la@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 11:10 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood School Variances

Hell, Mr. Westenhofer,

For many reasons I oppose the variances to the Linwood School Project. The building as designed is too large for the small lot, and it will take away precious green space for the children. It also affects the neighborhood and creates a looming, unattractive presence.

We can do better for the students and neighborhood.

Please oppose the current plan and insist the school board goes back to the drawing board.

Thank you.

Laura Smith
2127 Iglehart Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Sonja Mason <paigeprop@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 11:45 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: LMAP 1023 Osceola variance. BZA meeting today

Dear Mr. Westenhofer:

I will be as brief as I can in this email, as I know your time is valuable.

In the staff report on 1023 Osceola, the finding for criteria 4 should be reconsidered with the following facts in mind. "The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner." The need for such a large variance is created by the landowners' decision to increase the programming space and number of student programs at the Linwood School. Criterion 4 is not met.

The application calls for a 2,848 square foot variance (in footprint) as well as a 17 ft variance in height. The school building at 1023 Osceola currently contains programming space for grades K-3. The Monroe school currently contains programming space for grades PreK, 4-8, and ECFE. Additionally, some special education programming that requires dedicated square footage is also being moved from the larger campus and building at Monroe to the smaller Linwood.

If the applicant did not move additional grade-level programs to the smaller Linwood School site, then the size of the variance could be at a minimum much smaller and moreover would not have received the amount of opposition it has. For example, MDE requirements call for 850-950 square feet per elementary classroom, so the three classrooms for the 4th grade account for 2,550-2,850 sq feet in increased program requirement. Including the additional circulation and additional ELL and SPED classrooms required for fourth graders, would make the total increased square footage for this decision by the landowner to be even larger, 3,500-5,000 square feet. Without the added programming, the design could have been much smaller, and depending on the design decisions, it could have possibly stayed below the 30 foot height and not required a variance for height, or certainly have resulted in a much smaller percentage of lot coverage.

The Linwood-Monroe Lot Acreage

Linwood 1.81 acres [30%]

Monroe 4.23 acres [70%](1)

The current Linwood-Monroe square footage

Linwood 48,378 sq. ft [25%]

Monroe 147,532 sq.ft [75%](1)

The current Linwood-Monroe existing student population

Linwood 300 [36.5%]

Monroe 522 [63.5%](1)

The proposed Linwood-Monroe student population

Linwood 465 [45.5%]

Monroe 557 [54.5%]

The current Linwood-Monroe existing program distribution

Linwood K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd [36%, 4 of 11]

Monroe ECFE, PreK, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th [64%, 7 of 11]

The current Linwood-Monroe proposed program distribution

Linwood PreK, K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th [55%, 6 of 11]

Monroe ECFE, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th [45%, 5 of 11]

In summary, the proposal is to have:

Linwood 45.5% of students and 55% of programming on 30% of the acreage

Monroe 55% of students 45% of programming on 70% of the acreage

As a last note, the MDE has guidelines for per pupil gross square footage based on grade level and student population. The elementary requirements are the lowest, while high school requires the most. Schools with larger populations have some benefits in shared programming, so larger schools have a lower per pupil square footage compared to smaller schools. To compare for Monroe, for a student population of 500-999, the *high school* per pupil is 190-220 (middle school is 160-190). The proposed population of 577 students in 150,000 square feet is 260 square feet per student, well above the required range. Keeping the 4th grade students at Monroe, and the ratio would still be above the recommended range.

The fact of the matter is that the applicant's desire to move too many students and too many programs onto the smaller site is what has created the "need" for a major variance. SPPS has many options available to it, both at Monroe as well as at other underutilized sites around the city of St Paul, including at three within two miles of the Monroe site.

In closing, this issue has been inflated and conflated in the public discussion sphere to be about larger issues on the national political arena. This is unfortunate. The decision should be made based on criteria set forth in the variance process, including those choices made by the applicant.

Thank you,

Sonja Mason

St Paul Resident

Sources

(1) Approved Plans for Schools. <http://www.spps.org/Page/22144>

(2) 1/2017 Plans for 1023

Osceola http://www.spps.org/cms/lib010/mn01910242/centricity/domain/6633/linwood_site-floorplans-jan-23-2017.pdf

(3) Guide for Planning and School Construction

Projects <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/schfin/fac/cons/index.htm>

FILE
10-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Denise Aldrich <denisemaldrich@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 11:58 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: objection to Zoning Variance request for Linwood Monroe School
Attachments: letter.pdf

Mr. Westenhofer, Attached please find my letter in opposition to the application for a Zoning Variance, to be heard this afternoon.

Regards,
Denise Aldrich
neighbor

February 13, 2017

Dear Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals,

I live at 1053 Linwood Avenue, directly kitty-corner from Linwood Monroe school at 1023 Osceola Avenue. **I am writing to express my opposition to the SPPS Major Variance Application for Linwood Monroe School.**

I have two boys enrolled in Saint Paul Public Schools and grew up attending public schools. My husband and I chose to move to our neighborhood in Saint Paul (from Seattle, WA) in part because of the excellent schools available. I believe that education in our state should receive MORE funding that it receives now and that almost all of our public schools need some improvement to their physical environments. Linwood Monroe in particular has several challenges and issues that need to be addressed by the Board of Education. That said, this proposal for a new building at the lower campus does not make any sense and, I believe, does not meet the requirements for a Zoning Variance.

1) There is no inherent deficiency in the site itself to warrant a zoning variance. As I understand it, this property is the smallest in the SPPS district. As the school itself occupies two separate campuses and the lower campus has MUCH unbuilt space, it seems a completely arbitrary choice to attempt to bring the Linwood campus' enrollment up by 50%. The necessary improvements to the school CAN be made within the existing footprint of the building and therefore should be.

The site is small and SPPS needs to work within the standard zoning regulations to make the improvements needed. Additional students can be accommodated through construction or improvements at the other campus or at other schools with additional real estate available.

2) The proposed addition to the school is NOT in harmony with the surrounding neighborhood, nor does it comply with the City's Comprehensive Plan nor the Summit Hill District 16 Neighborhood Plan. The building would occupy too much of the property, destroying greenspace that is an essential gathering place for the neighborhood and play space for neighborhood children. The proposed height of the building will be unsightly to the surrounding properties and block sunlight for adjacent homeowners. This proposal is NOT in keeping with the architectural feel of the neighborhood and will negatively impact the essential character of the surrounding neighborhood.

3) The resulting greenspace at the school is sub-standard. Because of the proposed height of the building and its expansion to the west of the current building, during the school year MOST of the current (north) play area will be in shade, leaving in damp, muddy, and generally unpleasant for the children.

Most children in SPPS are allowed only 30 minutes a day outside. Especially from October through March, the students need as much exposure to sunlight as they can get for health reasons. The resulting play space will not meet Minnesota Dept of Education guidelines for outdoor play areas. Additionally, drawing on the experience of my own elementary-age boys, staff are reluctant to allow students out when playgrounds is muddy. I genuinely believe that the veritable destruction of the north playground will result in students having markedly less time outside for healthy play.

The need for improvements to Linwood Monroe School are real and valid. However, the current proposal for a 50% increase in student enrollment at the smallest campus in the SPPS district is arbitrary and will have a negative impact on the students and neighborhood. I encourage the School District to choose a better and more financially responsible solution (some of which have already been put forward). I encourage the Board of Zoning Appeals to deny the current application for Major Zoning Variances.

Sincerely,
Denise Aldrich

denisemaldrich@gmail.com
651.431.8855

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Alvina O'Brien <mamaob@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 1:15 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood School

The variances requested for the Linwood School should be DENIED. The whole project is a bad plan.

Alvina O'BRIEN
Sent from my iPhone

4/2/17

FILE
16-067184

Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)

From: Tom Salonek <tsalonek@intertech.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 01, 2016 1:23 PM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood School Variances

Hello,

I live at 1061 Goodrich Avenue and oppose the variances being requested for the addition to Linwood School.

Thanks,
Tom Salonek
Intertech
tsalonek@intertech.com
651.288.7030 (office)
651.336.8558 (mobile)
<http://www.intertech.com>
Building Technology Smarter™

Check out my new book: [*The 100 Building Blocks for Business Leadership*](#)

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Tom Salonek <tsalonek@intertech.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2017 8:58 AM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul); Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Cc: #CI-StPaul_Ward2
Subject: Linwood School

Hello,

We live at 1061 Goodrich Avenue and our family uses the green space/park at Linwood school. We strongly oppose the variances for the proposed Linwood School renovation.

Thanks for the consideration,
Tom and Linda Salonek

Thanks,
Tom Salonek
Intertech
tsalonek@intertech.com
651.288.7030 (office)
651.336.8558 (mobile)
<http://www.intertech.com>
Building Technology Smarter™

Check out my latest book: [*The 100 Building Blocks for Business Leadership*](#)

FILE
16-067184

Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)

From: Cynthia Truitt Lynch <cynthiatruittlynch@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 31, 2016 5:24 PM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Opposition to Variance Request

August 31, 2016
Dear Yaya,

I am writing to share my *displeasure* and *direct opposition* to the two-variance requests, which would construct an addition on the lot in which Linwood Elementary School resides.

First, these variances are not in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code. The request for the proposed addition to occupy %39.5 or 32, 109 square feet and construct a height of 47 feet for a height variance of 17 feet on an undersized lot in an historical area is a blemish and is a direct clash to the area in which these increases would exist. There are larger school owned buildings and lots sitting empty that would provide for the needs and changes of Linwood Elementary School. We love having a school in our neighborhood, but to drastically change the size and scale of a building, which cannot be accommodated on that tiny lot must not occur. School children will loose valuable green space and opportunities, when all we have for them is a massive structure, and no significant outdoor play area.

We are a green, walkable neighborhood, these changes would add an imposing eye sore of a building, decrease green space, add vehicular emissions and eliminate a vital amenity and neighborhood meeting place for children in the neighborhood. **Summit Hill is a community where 50% of its occupants live in rental properties.** Many do not have yards, and those who have yards; many lack the space for outdoor play. This is the only neighborhood park that does not cross a busy street.

This proposal does not comply with the Summit Neighborhood Plan. It destroys public green space, and does not reflect the character, mass and scale of nearby buildings and homes. **It doesn't meet current zoning guidelines.** This proposed expansion degrades community/institutional partnerships. It does not maintain or promote the maintenance or beautification of a public space. This proposed expansion does not serve the neighborhood. This proposed expansion does not beautify the public realm, nor increase use or better stewardship.

Linwood students are not being treated equitably with this proposed expansion. There is a clear reduction of outdoor play space that *does not* meet Minnesota guidelines. Reduction of green space is detrimental to the learning and well-being of children. Other schools have much larger green spaces for children, *this is a Title One issue*, when a largely diverse school must sacrifice green space for a building increase to accommodate more children. Why must Linwood school children sacrifice important outdoor play space when other schools do not have to do the same?

Increased numbers at the school will create more buses and cars bringing additional children, faculty and staff to this tiny lot. This will add exhaust from idling vehicles, adding pollution for those moving in and out of the building, and those in and around the neighborhood. The school has actively eliminated the neighborhood throughout this process.

And finally, projected student numbers do not support stressing this small building with an expansion that will not see significant increases in the future.

Thank you for your time.

Cynthia Truitt Lynch
Summit Hill resident
1011 Fairmount Ave

FILE
16 067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Cynthia Truitt Lynch <Cynthiatruittlynch@msn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2017 3:59 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: BZA variance request-Linwood school

Dear Mr. Westenhofer,

St Paul Public Schools has put forth a variance application. In order to grant the two variance requests, the proposal by the school needs to meet many of the criteria espoused by St. Paul. No doubt you are already familiar with these, and I have listed the most relevant ones to this application below.

While I am in full agreement and applaud the school's plan to add a cafeteria, comply with ADA, add a heating system and generally upgrade and modernize the building, something that should have been done and could have been done already, the plans still shows a clear reduction of outdoor space, which does not meet the Minnesota Department of Education guidelines for playgrounds. Expanding the building at the expense of an undersized lot gives up land needed for the well being of the school children.

Additionally, this proposal is in direction opposition to the Summit Hill plan, which destroys a natural amenity and does not reflect the mass and scale of nearby buildings. This proposal degrades community/institutional partnerships. Furthermore this variance request **does not treat Linwood students equitably.**

Diminishing outdoor space means less large-scale play opportunities. It reduces large motor skill running activities, and takes away precious possibilities where children may be boisterous, yelling in jubilation over a child-developed game. This winter I observed the happy squeals of Linwood students rolling giant snowballs across an open field unencumbered. The current revised plan does not give these young students room to do any of these things. This cannot be done on playground equipment, and the Youth sport court being proposed does not meet the criteria of the fourth grade students they wish to add to the school with the large out of scale building addition. I enjoy having a school across the street from where I live. I benefit from hearing their happy squeals at recess and at other times of the day, but these children also deserve a school that's outdoor facilities are right sized for the population and size of the children.

Please, consider that the success of a school requires the commitment of quality educators, updated buildings, but *also* the over-looked hidden classroom of green space. The great outdoors allows children the ability to weave their imagination without regard to noise or mess often restricted in a classroom. It gives adults the freedom to sit and chat with children in an unstructured way, and allows for observation of peer-to-peer conversation and negotiation. I sincerely ask the BZA to reflect on what is lost if the building expands beyond current code requirements. Outdoor green space is a classroom unto itself. Success of our children does not just happen within a building; it is hinged on providing exceptional open space too.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Cynthia Truitt Lynch

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