

FILE
10 06 18 4

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Lloyd Fjare <lgfjare@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2017 1:21 AM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

Mr. Sean Westenhofer,

I am writing to you today to let you know my wife and I are steadfastly opposed to the currently proposed Linwood school expansion. I have lived across the street from Linwood school at 1037 Fairmount Ave for 30+ years and the neighborhood children, school children, myself, wife, daughters and now my granddaughters have enjoyed the playground and ball field immensely.

The proposed expansion will cut the green space / playground by 50%.

The children in the neighborhood and at the school will no longer have a ball field on which to play baseball, softball, and soccer.

The expansion will also disrupt the established harmony and essential character of our neighborhood. It will also directly impact our direct and indirect sun light, especially during the winter months.

Let me make this clear. I am totally in favor of Linwood school remodeling to meeting ADA standards, putting in an elevator and remodeling its class rooms, but I am against this large of an expansion for the following reasons:

1. The current school's foot print is 23,332 square feet or 28% of the existing lot. With the proposed expansion increasing the foot print to 32,109 square feet or 39.5% of the lot. Code is a max of 28,451 square feet or 35% of the lot which is a variance of 3,658 square feet or 4.5%.

Referring to the second request regarding the building's height, code currently is 30 feet. The proposal want to match the existing (too tall) 47 feet on the south side of the building. However they are not allowing for the slope of the lot to the north which you can see on their side drawing of about 8 to 10+ feet. This would raise the south side of the school to 57 feet or a 90% increase above current code.

This project exceeds reasonable expansion on a very small lot.

2. No other site was considered. The current Linwood school site consists of 1/3 of a city block while their secondary school, Monroe sits on a 2 city block lot and occupies less than 40% of the space. It seems that the Monroe site is the obvious choice to expand.

3. The proposal seeks to increase the Linwood student population from 300 to 450. This will create an even greater problem with traffic congestion on our narrow streets.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,
Lloyd G Fjare

FILE
16-067184

Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)

From: lloyd fjare <lfjare@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 06, 2016 5:21 PM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood school expansion

Dear Yaya Diatta,

I am writing to you tonight to let you know my wife and I are steadfastly opposed to the Linwood School expansion.

The current proposed expansion plans are for a 60 Foot tall building and enlarging the foot print to wipe out 70%+ of the playground and ball field.

I have lived across the street of Linwood for 30+ years and have enjoyed the playground and ball field with our daughters and now our granddaughters.

The current plan will totally disrupt the established harmony of our neighborhood and will have a direct impact on our direct sun light. Especially in the winter months.

The children in the neighborhood will no longer have a ball field to play baseball, basketball softball and soccer. We have gotten signature from our neighbors in opposition to the expansion and you will or already have been presented them.

Hope to see you at tonight's meeting!

Sincerely,

Lloyd G Fjare, PT
1037 Fairmount Ave
Saint Paul, Mn
55105

FILE
16-067184

Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)

From: Jason Goldberg <jsgoldbe@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 07, 2016 1:16 PM
To: Diatta, YaYa (CI-StPaul)
Cc: Shayne Blacksborg
Subject: Variance application at Linwood School (1023 Oceola Ave.)

To the BZA:

As a resident and homeowner in Summit Hill located close to the Linwood School, please register my strong opposition to the variance application for 1023 Osceola Avenue. I urge the BZA to *deny* the application for the following reasons.

1. The variance will alter the essential character of the surrounding area (#1). The height, scale, and mass of the proposed building is *out of character with the immediate area*. Not only would it feel out of place for the neighborhood, but also it would *cast a literal shadow* over the adjacent houses, sidewalks, and streets, especially in the coldest winter months when sunlight is scarcest. **The height variance should therefore be denied.**

2. The variance will alter the essential character of the surrounding area (#2). The current school site is the only open play space within a considerable distance. The playground and field on the north side of the school functions as a de facto community gathering and play space. Reducing this available open space and play area (the fields as well as the playground) would be *a significant detriment to the quality of life of the residents of the neighborhood*, not only for the residents within walking distance to the site, but also to the many residents who I see driving to the playground because of a lack of other playgrounds and the opportunity to always have other families to play with. **The lot coverage variance should therefore be denied.**

3. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances created by the landowner and therefore the variance should be denied. The Saint Paul Public Schools representatives will try to argue that this expansion is needed to service the needs of the students. We are all sympathetic to the student needs for ample space and modern facilities. As a father of two elementary age children, I want the school children to have the best possible experience. However, SPPS is trying to put 10 pounds in a 5 pound bag. This site is the smallest of the SPPS school sites. Expanding enrollment, as this addition is intended to enable, is foolish. *Forcing SPPS to look at alternatives will be more helpful in the long run for the students, parents, and the community.*

4. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties in complying with the zoning provisions. There are alternatives to the proposed plan that have been brought forward by the community, however, while the SPPS representatives will try to argue that they have been open to community input, in fact *they have tried to push this through with minimal community input*. Had they started with a community-facing approach, they would have been able to see all the stakeholder concerns and consider all the options to ensure students got the best possible outcome. There are several current SPPS-owned properties that could be better than using the Osceola site, but SPPS has refused to be open to alternatives from the beginning.

5. The variance is not in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code. There are additional concerns with increasing enrollment at the small site such as parking, safety during pick-up and drop-off due to uncontrolled double parking, and parking at the corners of intersections. **For all these and the points above, the variance requests should be denied.**

Sincerely,
Jason Goldberg
1052 Fairmount Ave.

469

FILE
16-067184

September 4, 2016

City of St. Paul
Department of Safety & Inspections
Attn: Yaya Biatta
375 Jackson St
Suite 220
St. Paul, MN. 55101-1806

Re: File # 16-067184

I am opposed to both variances
1 and 2.

Shirley E. Dupresne
Shirley E. Dupresne
1014 Fairmount Av.
St. Paul, MN. 55105-3102

FILE
16-067169

Sean Westenhofer
Dept. of Safety & Inspections
City of St. Paul
375 Jackson St. Suite 220
St. Paul, MN 55101-1806

1014 Fairmount Av.
St. Paul, MN
55105-3102

File # 16-067184

I am against the two variances in order to
construct an addition onto Linwood
Elementary School building.

Shirley E. Dufresne
1014 Fairmount Av.
St. Paul, MN 55105

FILE
16-067184

JOHN P. GEHAN

1008 Fairmount Ave. ● St. Paul, MN 55105-3102 ● 651-222-8237

johngehan@comcast.net

September 8, 2016

To: Board of Zoning Appeals

From: John P. Gehan

Re: Variance applications for Linwood School

I oppose the variance applications submitted to the City's Board of Zoning Appeals for the following reasons, and urge you to do the same:

1) Fails to comply: The application for variances does not satisfy the five code requirements listed in the variance procedures of the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). On a purely technical level, the proposal does not meet those requirements. The proposal is not in harmony with the general intent of the zoning code (1), is inconsistent with the comprehensive plan (2), is not needed because of practical difficulties (3) or unique property characteristics (4), and will alter the essential character of the surrounding area (5).

2) Need: The proposed expansion is unnecessary. The school administration has several viable alternatives to expanding the Linwood campus on the scale they have proposed.

3) Height: The variance request indicates that the proposed height of the new addition will be 47 feet (17 feet over code). However, that claim measures the height on the south side of the building. Because the ground slopes down to the north, the height of the north face of the new addition will be about 8 feet higher. Add to that the "parapet" (2 or 3 feet) and the utilities and other mechanical equipment located on the "roof," and the final height may be closer to 62 feet. The new addition will tower over the neighborhood, shading many adjoining buildings,

and imposing an institutional sore thumb on the surrounding community.

4) Size/footprint: The larger footprint of the new expanded school would remove a significant amount of open space in the community, and playground space for the school children. There is no alternative open space in the area.

5) Loss of student play space: The loss of significant playground space is harmful to the Linwood students. There are many good reasons, grounded in research, why playgrounds, play space, and playtime are valuable to children, in both developmental as well as educational terms. Kids need to run, yell, socialize, make friends, let off steam, have fights, negotiate rules, develop physical coordination. Play is not extra “fluff.”

6) Loss of community play space: The existing Linwood playground has become a de facto community park, in an area that has no parks. Hundreds of neighborhood children play there.

7) Discriminatory: Linwood is a Title 1 school with a high percentage of minority and lower-income students. They need and deserve as much (and maybe even more) playground space as do the children in “whiter” schools that have ample play areas.

8) Smallest site: The Linwood site is the smallest of any elementary school site in the St. Paul school system. Linwood sits on about one-third of a city block. Most other schools sit on one or even two blocks. The existing playground does not even meet recommended size requirements for current students. The Linwood proposal would combine even more students onto an even smaller playground.

9) Increased traffic, noise, fumes: The planned substantial expansion of Linwood will bring increased traffic from busses, cars, and trucks; increased noise and exhaust fumes; and heightened safety concerns as traffic negotiates narrow side streets and the alley, especially in winter.

10) Loss of historic landmark: Linwood’s round smokestack/chimney is one of the most prominent, if not the most prominent, landmarks in

the entire neighborhood. It is unwise to destroy the neighborhood's architectural history.

11) Process: From the beginning of this project, the neighbors were excluded from the planning process. Not a single neighbor knew anything about the proposed expansion until notified by the City that three variances had been applied for by the school administration. When the Summit Hill Association organized a series of smaller meetings with school representatives, the school officials refused to negotiate on the neighborhood's central concerns. Many people have viewed the behavior of the previous school administration as arrogant and imperious, indifferent to and dismissive of outside perspectives. The school administration's approach in the past has had a harmful effect on the neighborhood and ultimately on the schools.

FILE
16-067184

JOHN P. GEHAN

1008 Fairmount Ave. ● St. Paul, MN 55105-3102 ● 651-222-8237
johngehan@comcast.net

February 6, 2017

To the members of the Board of Zoning Appeals:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns regarding the proposed expansion of the Linwood lower school at 1023 Osceola Ave. and the school administration's request for zoning variances.

I live a few doors down from Linwood. I grew up in the neighborhood and attended Linwood for kindergarten. My children and grandchildren all attended public schools. I have been an eyewitness to Linwood for 67 years.

This issue has become a contentious matter that has pitted pro-expansion interests against neighbors who want to limit the expansion. All parties believe, however, that substantial improvements to the existing building are long overdue. All parties accept the need for some limited expansion to provide needed facilities to the school. And all parties believe that we should create a great school.

The questions are: How much? How big? How tall?

For over 100 years, the neighborhood has welcomed Linwood School and its children, often assisting with groundskeeping, playground construction, and volunteering. Over the years, many

residents and their children have attended Linwood School and have worked hard to create a supportive and friendly atmosphere for the school. There has never been, to my knowledge, any acrimony similar to the type that has surfaced in recent months.

My understanding is that the BZA is required to weigh the variance requests using the six criteria stated in the city code. I understand that your role is not to make educational policy for the district, nor to referee social relations among community groups. I will focus my comments on why I believe these criteria as stated in city code have not been met by the applicant and why you must reject the variance request.

It is important to briefly summarize the context of this issue. For decades, the St. Paul school administration has failed to make necessary improvements to the existing school building. The bathrooms, for example, should have been made ADA-compliant 22 years ago. The heating/cooling system should have been upgraded long ago. The location of an arts magnet school in a building without a stage was nothing but boneheaded. This list goes on and on. The neglect of Linwood by the school administration is contemptible. It is that neglect that has brought about the current dispute.

All these needed improvements could have been made already, if the school administration had placed a priority on that work. And, the needed improvements could be made now, without any need for variances, if the school administration revised its demand for programming changes at Linwood that would increase student population by 50 percent.

In addition, it is essential to understand the location and size of the Linwood site. Linwood has the smallest campus of any school in the St. Paul system. While most schools enjoy a full city block, or even two blocks, the Linwood campus encompasses only one-third of a city block, bounded by narrow side streets. Several school administrators and teachers have privately admitted that they would not be permitted to build on such a small site today. The Linwood campus is inadequate for the existing students; the proposed dramatic expansion of students, teachers, staff, cars, busses, and programming on this miniaturized campus will harm both the students and the neighborhood.

I urge the BZA members to actually visit the Linwood site to understand the physical scale of the school, of the site, and of the proposed expansion.

Given the fact that Linwood has a relatively high percentage of lower-income and minority students, it appears to be a particularly questionable decision to pack even more students, staff, and programming into this small site while removing a substantial amount of outdoor play area. This strikes me as a clear case of systemic, institutional discrimination that will last for generations. Why should minority and lower-income students have to settle for less, while students in some of the more affluent "whiter" schools enjoy relatively spacious facilities and grounds?

I have never witnessed any type of hostility coming from the neighbors to the students, despite the slanderous charges of some of the over-eager supporters of the expansion. But I have seen a decades-long neglect of the facility by the system. This, I think, is the essence of racism, built into the very structure of our institutions.

Finally, the motivations of the school administration for the Linwood expansion may not have been fully disclosed. Given the alternatives, it is unnecessary to construct such a large expansion on such a small site. We would like to see an honest presentation of the factors driving this proposal. Are low test scores, or a lack of enrollment, at other schools really behind this proposed expansion? We have not been presented with evidence; rather the school district has presented its positions, and then has demanded that those positions be accepted without question.

Following are some of the reasons I believe the proposed expansion should be rejected:

City code Criterion #1 – The variance is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning code.

The scale of the proposal – its mass, its footprint, its height -- is not consistent with low-density residential neighborhood. The stated “Intent and Purpose (A)” of the zoning code is “To promote and protect the public health, safety, morals, aesthetics, economic viability and general welfare of the community.”

In fact, the proposed expansion conflicts with several strategies in the code, such as “Land Use Strategy 3: Promote Aesthetics and Development Standards” and several strategies and sub-strategies within the Historic Preservation section.

“Intent and Purpose (C)” of the zoning code calls for classifying “all property in such manner as to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the city.” 1023 Osceola is zoned R4, which is defined as “one-family residential districts [that] provide for an environment of predominantly low-density, one-family dwellings.” While “civic and institutional uses, public services and utilities that serve the residents in the districts” are specifically allowed, they are subject to the same height and lot coverage restrictions as housing. It is the zoning code’s intent that institutions in residential districts match the scale of the residential character of the district. The large scale of the proposed addition is appropriate in a higher density or commercial district.

“Intent and Purpose (E)” of the zoning code states: “To ensure adequate light, air, privacy and convenience of access to property.” The proposed expansion would significantly and negatively impact light due to its height, small setbacks and overall massing; negatively impact privacy of neighboring residential properties, which are predominantly 30 feet or less in height, by allowing greater visual access to upper floors and backyards due to added height over a much greater footprint than current building; and limit access to the community of valued and highly-utilized recreational and green space that would be significantly reduced.

“Intent and Purpose (F)” of the zoning code states: “To facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewage disposal,

recreation and other public requirements.” This proposed expansion would actually create greater traffic congestion and reduce parking for residents in the neighborhood; and demonstrably limit a valued recreational resource for the surrounding community.

“Intent and Purpose (G)” of the zoning code states: “To lessen congestion of the public streets by providing off-street parking of motor vehicles and for off-street loading and unloading of commercial vehicles.” While more off-street parking has been provided, the proposal would actually increase congestion by not providing for off-street loading/unloading of school buses and would, in fact, eliminate some current on-street parking serving the residents. Moreover, the increased usage that would result from more teachers, staff, parents and other stakeholders would increase traffic in an area that was not designed for such intensity of use. The school is bordered on three sides by narrow side streets that become even less friendly in winter.

“Intent and Purpose (H)” of the zoning code states: “To provide for safe and efficient circulation of all modes of transportation, including transit, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.” This proposal would actually add to congestion and present greater safety issues by cutting off existing sight lines in a dense residential area due to the lot coverage, height, and overall massing of the proposed expanded building.

“Intent and Purpose (I)” of the zoning code states: “To ensure a compatible mix of land uses, at densities that support transit, that reflect the scale, character and urban design of Saint Paul’s existing traditional neighborhoods.” The proposed expansion calls for a

building that is completely out of scale with the existing residential neighborhood, and which is out of character with the nature of this state-designated historic district.

“Intent and Purpose (L)” of the zoning code states: “To conserve and improve property values.” There is little doubt that allowing a building that looms over surrounding residences, blocking light and sight lines, while eliminating valued recreational and community-building amenities, will negatively impact property values and destabilize this established, historic neighborhood.

“Intent and Purpose (M)” of the zoning code states: “To protect all areas of the city from harmful encroachment by incompatible uses.” The incompatibility lies not with the fundamental use of this site for educational purposes, but by unnecessarily forcing a much more intensive use of the small site than was originally intended. Several other options exist that weren’t formally considered and analyzed which would likely be a better current and future fit for the district’s stated goals.

“Intent and Purpose (N)” of the zoning code states: “To prevent the overcrowding of land and undue congestion of the population.” This proposal is an overly intensive use of a site that was never intended, with several permanent negative impacts that override the limited, and often unsupported by data, benefits suggested by the school district. Again, where’s the evidence? Where’s the beef?

“Intent and Purpose (O)” of the zoning code states: “To fix reasonable standards to which buildings, structures and uses shall conform.” There is nothing to prevent the school district from

upgrading the facilities without engaging in this excessive expansion.

City code Criterion #2 – The variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The proposed expansion is incompatible with the Comprehensive Plan for all the reasons stated above. All the desired outcomes (such as ADA accessibility, heating/cooling improvements, classroom re-construction, addition of a separate gym, etc.) as stated by the school administration can be accomplished on a smaller scale than proposed. There is no case made for how the proposed expansion will support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Specifically, the proposal conflicts with the city's Comprehensive Plan as follows:

The proposal will eliminate about 38% of the publically accessible open space and eliminate about 40% of the green infrastructure. (Parks: 2:10 and Recreation: 5.19)

The proposal will destroy an open space, a part of a natural ecosystem and a critical element in the public realm. (Land Use:3.12)

The proposal does not follow city codes; it does not follow the wishes of our community-based organization's efforts; and it does not promote active personal mobility. In fact, it decreases the opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists by eliminating a critical amenity, destination, and location for these activities. (Housing 2.1)

The proposal calls for an approximate 40% decrease in a natural, green space such as lawn and field, and the creation of about 44%

increase in impervious surfaces such as parking lots and driveways. In addition to the 37% increase in roof surface, this proposal negatively impacts water quality. (Water Resources 2.9)

The proposal will increase runoff from new roofs, sidewalks, driveways, and parking lots; will eliminate about 40% of the natural area; and will eliminate at least eight (8) trees. (Water Resources: 2.13)

City code Criterion #3 – The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties complying with the provision, 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.

The school administration's proposal does not present evidence that alternative sites (such as the Albion/Riverside site, the vacant city block adjacent to Monroe school, vacant land next to Groveland or Randolph Heights, etc.) are unavailable and are not better locations for expansion. In addition, the proposal does not present evidence whether alternative programming configurations (such as limited arts program enrollment, retention of some grades at Monroe, etc.) may be a better option.

All of the existing problems with the existing Linwood facility can be solved without the excessive expansion.

City code Criterion #4 – The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.

The proposed expansion and related programming increase, rather than any feature of the site itself, is the basis for the variance request. The “plight” of applicants has been created by applicants themselves.

City code Criterion #6 – The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.

As stated above, the proposed expansion that will be created in the middle of a largely single family residential area will be out of scale and character with the surrounding neighborhood. It is too tall, too large, too much for the postage–stamp–sized lot. It will have a dramatic negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

FILE
16-067184

Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)

From: Nancy O'B <nancyobwagner@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 7, 2017 12:59 PM
To: Westenhofer, Sean (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Linwood School

Hi Sean,

I am a neighbor of the Linwood School, and am writing to state my opposition to the request for variances for this project. I do not believe the project qualifies for variances because:

a) The project is *not* in harmony with the general purposes and intents of the zoning codes. The high and lot coverage codes were established to create a reasonable balance between property owner's desires to build and neighbor's interests in open space and sunlight. This proposal is too big and too large and will negatively impact the neighbors.

b) The project is *not* consistent with the comprehensive plan. The City's comprehensive plan promote the preservation of green space and the character of historic districts, and this project reduces green space and negatively impacts our historic district.

c) There are no practical difficulties in complying with the zoning laws. The only issues are "efficiency" and "money" which do not qualify. SPPS has dozens of properties upon which to expand, most noticeably at the Monroe campus, where these students presently are.

d) There is nothing unique about this property. The plight is solely created by the SPPS's desire to increase the program beyond what can be supported by the property size. All ADA improvements, HVAC updates, classroom expansions and even the addition of a cafeteria and some additional classrooms can be accommodated within the zoning guidelines. Only by adding on 175 additional kids does SPPS need to have a variance.

e) The essential character of the neighborhood will be negatively impacted.

Thank you,

Nancy O'Brien Wagner
1049 Linwood Ave.

Crippen, Debbie (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

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Natalie Hopfield