

Moore, Shari (CI-StPaul)

From: Melissa Nonnemacher <nonn0004@mac.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 12, 2017 11:54 AM
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Linwood Variance Appeal

Dear City Council Members,

As a close neighbor to the Linwood school at 1023 Osceola, I am concerned about the out-of-scale addition that SPPS has planned for the school. Many of us in the neighborhood have spent a lot of time researching the zoning codes in Saint Paul to understand whether the addition planned to Linwood meets all of the criteria necessary to be granted variances. The reasons as to why the criteria have not been met have been discussed in detail in the appeal, so I won't go into that here. Instead, I would like to relate some information about other SPPS schools and let you know of the great importance that the green, open space on the north side of the school has to the students and the surrounding neighborhood.

When the neighbors (over a year ago) first received, out of the blue, the post card in the mail notifying us that major variances were requested to build a massive addition to our neighborhood school, we started to collect information about the other SPPS school sites. We compared their buildings, acres the schools were built on, and student populations per school. We calculated the outdoor open play space for each school and were distressed to see how little outdoor open space the Linwood students and neighborhood already had in comparison to all other SPPS schools. It was easiest for us to see the differences in outdoor play space by actually visiting a variety of SPPS sites and many of us have taken the time to do this.

In order to fully understand the issue, we feel it is important for the council members to have visited and become familiar with the Linwood site and other SPPS schools. It would be greatly appreciated if you could visit some nearby school sites (like Randolph Heights, Obama, JJ Hill, Groveland) and really look at them. Note how the schools are situated on at least one entire block. Look at the heights of the schools and their setbacks and how the school buildings lack close neighbors. Then note how much outside play space and green space these schools and neighborhoods have. These open play spaces are important amenities for the children and neighborhoods. Then, please tour the Linwood site at 1023 Osceola. Notice how the Linwood school site is approximately 1/3 of a block and is the smallest SPPS site. The entire site is only 1.82 acres which is about the same size as 13 small house lots, compared to 3.53 acres at JJ Hill (25 small house lots). See how the school is situated directly next door to many homes and how the parking lot and back of the school share the alley space with neighbors. Notice that the current school is set back a reasonable number of feet from the sidewalk on Oxford, but how that will be greatly reduced with the planned addition and how this will impact the neighbors on Oxford. Neighbors who now look out on children playing in the green, open space to the north side of the school will face a large wall if this outsized addition is built.

After comparing the Linwood School site to any other SPPS school it will become obvious how the students and the neighborhood already have much less open play space than other schools and their surrounding neighborhoods. Yet, this north side play space is a greatly cherished space for students and neighborhood children despite its already small size. Reducing this open space on the north side of the school and adding a large building puts the students and neighborhood at a disadvantage.

We are fully behind making the needed improvements to the school, like a separate gym and cafeteria, ADA-compliant school, etc. But, the current proposed design requiring two major variances that don't meet zoning criteria and which would put a massive building on the smallest SPPS elementary school campus is not the right solution. We believe that if SPPS would work with the neighbors, we can find a solution together that satisfies everyone.

Thank you,

Melissa Nonnemacher
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