

Dear Longfellow neighbors,

We, the neighbors in the vicinity of Minnehaha Academy (MA), wanted to inform you of the proposed changes that MA wants to make to its upper campus athletic field located in the Cooper neighborhood. **This is an urgent matter, as these changes are due to be reviewed for a decision by the Minneapolis City Planning Commission on May 20.** These changes, should they be allowed to go forward, would result in significant negative impacts on our community.

### What do we want?

- We want the City of Minneapolis to deny MA's application for several variances and a conditional use permit for the following changes to their athletic field:
  - Installation of 75 and 80 ft floodlights
  - Installation of an astroturf field
  - Construction of new bleachers with a press box, and a taller scoreboard
- We want MA to maintain their current day-time use of the athletic field, and not install a potentially toxic environmental hazard, to prevent severe negative impacts on the resident neighbors' welfare, safety, and daily life.
- We want the city to call for an environmental review to analyze long-term health risks of installing an astroturf field.

### Why do we want it?

We are predominantly a residential neighborhood that enjoys quiet and peaceful evenings with family, neighbors and friends. We cherish our safe and healthy environment where we can take walks in the neighborhood, let our children play on the sidewalks and parks, and enjoy social and family activities without the hazard of increased traffic, environmental hazards, and noise and light pollution.

With these changes, MA has stated their intention to expand their athletic schedule to host night games for their school's soccer and lacrosse programs. Additionally, in the last community meeting hosted by MA on April 2, they disclosed that after these proposed changes are made, they plan to rent their field to external, third-party organizations. These changes, along with MA's ability to rent the field out, would subject neighbors to:

- Light pollution into the late evening hours (as late as 10pm),
- A corresponding expansion of noise pollution, through their use of amplified sound for music, event announcements and buzzers, as well as crowd noise, and
- An increase in safety and environmental hazards from traffic, parking congestion, and littering, caused by the drastic influx of vehicles and attendees during these events.
- An increase in health and environmental risks if toxic PFAS chemicals are found to be used in the astroturf.

Notably, the great majority of Minnehaha Academy students and other entities that may use the field, day or night, do not live in the neighborhood. Extending athletic activities after dark and allowing unchecked use by third party organizations would only serve to greatly expand the negative impact to the resident neighbors.

The current use of the field already creates a significant nuisance to the surrounding neighborhood. MA historically has not responded to neighbor requests for noise reduction or feedback on their events. Furthermore, at the urging of neighborhood residents, MA has hosted two community meetings about this project where neighbors have expressed these and other concerns, yet MA has refused to tailor their project to address these issues in any way. Due to this we have a lack of confidence as neighbors of MA that they will heed our concerns in the future.

MA is requesting permission from the City of Minneapolis to exceed set-back, height, impervious surface and lighting limitations set forth in the zoning code for the purpose of using their property in ways that are unnecessary, unreasonable, and detrimental to the rest of the surrounding community. They are planning to install an astroturf field months before a new state law (Amara's Law) would go into effect on January 1, 2025, banning certain uses of substances containing PFAS chemicals. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is possibly considering synthetic turf as one of the uses that could be banned if PFAS is present. We, the resident neighbors, are not asking to take anything away

from Minnehaha Academy. Rather, we want to preserve our right to be protected from this overreach and inconsiderate use of their property, which would come at the expense of the use and enjoyment of ours.

### **What can we do?**

MA has submitted their application for these changes to the Minneapolis City Planning Commission. A public hearing before the Planning Commission is scheduled for Monday, May 20, at 4:30pm, in Room 350 Public Service Center, 250 S 4<sup>th</sup> St, Minneapolis, MN.

This is a forum where residents can express their concerns and objections to the project in person, or they can submit them in writing to [Hilary.Dvorak@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:Hilary.Dvorak@minneapolismn.gov).

Additionally, if you are a resident living in the vicinity of MA or in one of the other Longfellow region neighborhoods, and share these concerns, you can also contact the following:

- Our Ward 12 council member: Aurin Chowdhury – [aurin.chowdhury@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:aurin.chowdhury@minneapolismn.gov)
- The Longfellow Community Council: Ben Howery – [ben@longfellow.org](mailto:ben@longfellow.org); [info@longfellow.org](mailto:info@longfellow.org)
- The City Planning Commission who will be the decision maker for MA's application (including CM Chowdhury):
  - o Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley - [angela.conley@hennepin.us](mailto:angela.conley@hennepin.us)
  - o Park Board Commissioner Becka Thompson - [bthompson@minneapolisparcs.org](mailto:bthompson@minneapolisparcs.org)
  - o School Board Member Joyner Emerick - [joyner.emerick@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:joyner.emerick@mpls.k12.mn.us)
  - o Mayor Representative Alyssa Olson – [alyssa.olson@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:alyssa.olson@minneapolismn.gov)
  - o City Resident Tom Wagner – [tom.wagner@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:tom.wagner@minneapolismn.gov)
  - o City Resident Joseph Campbell – [joseph.campbell@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:joseph.campbell@minneapolismn.gov)
  - o City Resident Bill Baxley – [billbaxley@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:billbaxley@minneapolismn.gov)
  - o City Resident Christopher Meyer – [christopher.meyer@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:christopher.meyer@minneapolismn.gov)
  - o City Resident Kellie Rose Jones – [kellierose.jones@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:kellierose.jones@minneapolismn.gov)

Thank you for your support,

Your Cooper neighbors.

May 6, 2024