1. BET Budget Presentation & Public Hearing Documents

   Documents:

   SUB_TO_APP_BUDGET_PRESENTATION_PUBLIC_HEARING_01-29-18.PDF
   APPROVED_BET_BUDGET_PRESENT_PUBLIC_HEARING_01-29-18.PDF
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PUBLIC HEARING

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The following speakers addressed the Committee:

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- Lucia Jansen – RTM, Chairman Budget Overview Committee - spoke in support of the Budget’s measurable efficiency through cost-saving reforms. She identified concerns
about the fiscal impact of the State’s difficulties and Federal policies. She noted that savings in Fixed Costs helped the budget. Additionally, she spoke in opposition to BOE’s Budget increase of 2.6% being over the 2.4% BET Budget Guidelines; BOE’s 11.3 FTE increase of staff without cost-saving offsetting. She also spoke in opposition to The Nathaniel Witherell’s increase in headcount without cost-savings.

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[Signature]
Catherine Sidor, Recording Secretary

[Signature]
Leslie Moriarty, Chair
Good evening. My name is Peet Foster and I live on Bramble Lane. My backyard abuts Eastern Middle School.

I ask that you deny budgeting for the $300,000 “Planning and Design Funds for Engineered Grass and Performance Lights for the following two reasons:

1). There is not a logical reason to add Performance Lights field lighting for normal Middle School field usage.

2). There is not a sensible reason to use an engineered grass.

Eastern Middle School, first and foremost, is a Middle School. It is not a Recreational Sports Facility. Eastern Middle and Riverside Elementary Schools are located within a tight knit, residential community on the only Unprotected Open Space areas located between the Post Road and the RR Tracks.

A Middle School does not require Performance Lights on their playing fields. The abutting community members are not in support of the goals implied by this proposed study which seeks to increase field usage and play time. It will adversely impact our residential property values and our right to the quiet and peaceful enjoyment of our backyards.

Engineered grass was developed with the desire to be slow growing - “Low Mow” and resistant to glycophosate herbicides - “Roundup Ready”. Neither of these traits are desirable or appropriate on a Middle School Field or a children’s play area.

- Slow growing grass will not hold up as well in the highly trafficked areas of the Soccer field. Also,

- CT Senate Bill 68, passed and amended in 2014, specifically bans all applications of lawn care Pesticides, and this is a term in the bill which includes herbicides. It bans the application of lawn care Pesticides on
Public Comment - BET Hearing, Monday January 29, 2018
Re: $300,000 Planning & Design Funds for Engineered Natural Grass

- the grounds of any park, athletic field, municipal green or playground with just one exception. And that exception arises when there is a need to eliminate an immediate threat to human health. Think Lyme’s disease, West Nile Fever, Malaria etc., But this is not weeds!


Furthermore, Tests conducted way back in 2000 by Pure Seed Testing Inc., an Oregon based company, showed that pollen from the genetically altered grass could travel as far as 1,000 metres (.6 mile) and cross fertilize other plants and grasses. Subsequent reports by others show transgenic plant distribution of the engineered grasses at much further distances, some 13 miles and crossing a river. This has consequences.

"Once it's in the field (GMO Grass), it can be spread and you can get a buildup of herbicide-tolerant weeds, plus there’s the potential liability of contaminating traditional varieties.” (of grass)

- Len Hopper, the head of the landscape architecture division for the New York City Housing Authority.

In 2005, Scotts was fined $500,000 for allowing the escape of one variety of GMO grass in Oregon and has been working to eradicate it. They were not successful.

So in 2017 they shifted strategies. The Oregonian reported on Jan 8, 2017 that:

“After more than a decade of unsuccessful efforts to eradicate the genetically modified grass it created and allowed to escape, lawn and garden giant Scotts Miracle-Gro now wants to step back and shift the burden to Oregonians”.

Page 2 of 3
Public Comment - BET Hearing, Monday January 29, 2018
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To conclude, let’s not introduce this stuff on our kid’s playing fields! would you want to live with this next to your back yard?

I think that budgeting $300,00 for Planning and Design Funds utilizing Engineered Grass and Performance Lights in order to extend field usage and play times on our Middle School fields is misguided. It changes the nature and safety of our kids’ play areas. It affects the character and value of our neighborhoods and that it is a misuse of taxpayer money.

Thank you for your time tonight.
Thoughts About the Need for Lights at Middle Schools and Expending $300,000 to Study the Issue.

My name is Peter Uhry. I currently live at 67 Long Meadow Road in Riverside CT and before 2012 lived in Old Greenwich for 42 years.

I am here to express my reservations about the Town of Greenwich authorizing, what I have been led to believe is, $300,000 for planning and design funds relating to surface materials and lights in the playing fields at our Middle Schools.

While the dollar amount I just mentioned may have been modified now that engineered grass, rather than turf, is being considered along with high performance lights for our Middle Schools, I believe that rather than spend any money now, some simple questions should be asked and answered first.

1. Who wants lights at these schools? The neighbors don't seem to think it is a good idea. I understand residents from Cos Cob have recently made that clear regarding Central Middle School as did neighbors near Eastern Middle School in 2016. Can I assume Town officials have asked the neighbors about the issues of lights, noise and additional traffic in their neighborhoods?

2. Who has reached out to the Town's realtors to see what impact lights have on the prices of houses should lights be installed. Clearly, neighbors close to Greenwich High School don’t like lights and sharply disagree with attempts to have longer times for lights at the High School. And, I understand that the lack of lights at the Cos Cob Park (the old power plant site) is no accident. Neighbors objected to lights and the Town listened.

3. Did anyone think to contact the folks at Audubon about the environmental consequences of night lighting on wildlife? A simple call might verify that indeed lights have a strong negative impact on avian life near "high performance lights" used for playing fields. I add that when the industrial park in Stamford near the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center was under consideration in the mid 1970s, a Federal Environmental Impact Report contained negative concerns about the added brightness that would flood the unique bog at the north end of that park property as well as the Old Greenwich neighbors.

4. I also note Stamford backed off putting an illuminated nighttime batting practice facility in Rosa Hartman Park (on the Stamford side) after residents in Old Greenwich threatened legal action. (That was in the 1990s I believe)

Norma Bartol wrote on page 2 of the GT on January 26th, (and I paraphrase here).... she knows that lights are a thorny issue.... the Town wants to keep up
NOTES for the Greenwich, CT BET Meeting

Jan., 01/29/18

NOTES Title: “To POISON or not to POISON, - that is the question”

1. It is a pleasure to be here today to share some of my thoughts with you about various future plans our town is considering and how these plans will affect my neighbors, as well as me as a homeowner. I am also an abutter (for the past 42 years) whose backyard fence abuts the Eastern Middle School (EMS) perimeter fence, and my backyard deck is less than 100 feet from the batting cage of the baseball field in the northeast corner of the schoolyard of Eastern Middle School.

2. My current perspective is also necessarily influenced by the fact that I trained for my MD from Cornell Univ. Medical College (CUMC) - New York Hospital, where our Chairman of the Biochemistry Department had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine, so we naturally talked a lot about molecules, toxicity, and how they were intertwined with our teachings in the Department of Public Health.

3. So the concept of a “poison” is something that is worth considering in a broader sense, in which negative effects can take decades or even a generation or two to manifest themselves. For example, as a youngster I remember that liquid mercury, or lead paint or plumbing, or cigarettes, or asbestos, did not inspire any major alarm. So look what happened!

4. Currently, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO’s) such as GMO Kentucky bluegrass, also do not inspire any major concerns about the closely related notorious weed killer, “Roundup-glyphosate.” Yet there are many people and studies which evoke major concerns about causation of cancer, parkinsonism, and autism. To ignore the questions, including even the question of GMO grass (and reduce it to a three minute presentation!) is to repeat a mistake made in the past by so many municipalities, including Greenwich CT in which, “haste makes waste!” For example, there are a number of locations in our town, including the high school playing field, which have been very much affected by soil contamination, and those past hasty “3-minute decisions” have come back to haunt us, and cost us plenty to remedy when we yielded to the temptation of a quick shortcut of some sort, — naively thinking that we could somehow outwit Mother Nature and the laws of chemistry, - which you can NEVER really do.

5. But the fundamental question is really what kind of quality of life do we want to preserve in the Riverside neighborhood. The broad and inviting EMS field is such a tempting target for development, particularly by those who do not live in this neighborhood. After my highly stimulating years in noisy NYC at Cornell Medical College, with Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital, and Hospital for Special Surgery just a block away, I was eventually ready to seek a quiet, tranquil, unpolluted environment in which to live. I spent about two years, looking at over 100 houses until I located my current home, with its backyard fence overlooking EMS’s playing field, with all that natural grass. I bought the house because of the tranquil view and sightline, - not the architecture of the house.
6. Had there been any sleep-disrupting (melatonin-disrupting) active night lighting and sports complex on that field in the evenings, I would never have given it a second look.

6.1 The disruption caused by the proposed heavy-duty lighting for night play on a major sports field is a serious threat to the tranquility and ambience of the neighborhood. As you may know the neighborhood has changed substantially in the past decade or so. Rather than moving north of the Merritt Parkway as before, the VERY many families that have moved on to our street and the neighboring streets are building and buying multiple large “McMansions” which cost in the neighborhood of $3-$4 million, vastly increasing the taxable base for our town. They too are drawn by the tranquility that the Eastern Middle School field affords, our only Riverside neighborhood de-facto Park. So the specter of noise and the crush of increased traffic from spectator cars is a serious threat to what makes this neighborhood so special, and disrupting the reassuring promise and basic right of “quiet enjoyment” of one’s home. It is not surprising that real estate folks have warned of potentially severe home value drops of up to 50% in abutting homes, if this threat of an illuminated night sports complex were to be realized.

7. We very much need to maintain that open field which is such a soothing blessing for such a variety of unstructured activities. I witness it being used almost constantly by youngsters racing across the field, playing informal (not regimented) games, racing their dogs, launching their rockets, flying their kites and airplanes, sledding down the small hill in the corner of the field, striding across with their cross-country skis in the wintertime. It is these kind of UNSTRUCTURED activities (not supervised League sports) that best promote independence and self-confidence growth in youngsters. Both my son and daughter attended EMS, during principal Ben Davenport’s era, and benefited enormously from the warm-hearted schooling atmosphere at EMS. My daughter, near the top of her class, sang the lead role in “Brigadoon” in the school musical. My son once, on a dare from a bunch of his cocky buddies in 6th grade, climbed Spider-Man style up the outside wall of the school up onto the roof (and got in trouble for it!) as they stared upward in chagrined amazement.

8. But he learned something from this crazy roof misadventure and went on to become a top winter ice climber, with the two ice axes and going on expeditions up Mount Washington, in New Hampshire in the winter to climb frozen waterfalls. Ultimately both kids went on to study history and economics at the University of Pennsylvania and are now happy high-functional adults!

All because of that quiet open field in back of EMS!

So let us not tamper with a winning, (but delicately balanced and fragile,) neighborhood formula that we have right now.

I like it here where I have been for the past 42 years,- and do not want to flee to Florida!

Respectfully submitted,

Jurij Savyckyj, MD