

Case #21-02, 412 Commonwealth Road
Statement From Abutter For The Record

I want to thank the Zoning Board of Appeals for the opportunity to address the March 9, 2021 meeting regarding Case #21-02, 412 Commonwealth Road.

This follow up statement represents safety and community concerns in four areas: (1) lighting; (2) noise; (3) traffic safety and parking; and (4) environment. The petitioner's responses on these topics were inadequate to address the valid concerns for residents of Wayland.

1. Lighting

Our concerns center on the height of the lighting poles and the impact of the light on the neighboring homes, streets and conservation land.

While the petitioner stated he did not know the relative height of the lighting poles compared to the surrounding trees, another abutter provided this information during the meeting and such information has not been disputed. The proposed height of the poles will tower above the surrounding treetops, creating an eyesore to both the abutters and visitors to the adjacent conservation land.

The presentation failed to adequately address the lighting itself, including the impact of the light on adjacent streets and homes. The petitioner acknowledged that the slide representing advances in lighting over time was "pixelated" and the text was illegible, leaving no opportunity for a meaningful discussion. The petitioner did explain in the diagram of lighting impacts that the green colored areas were equivalent to a 100-watt light bulb. That is not a trivial amount of light. After all, who among us wants a 100-watt light bulb shining into our bedroom windows at 10 PM?

We have all squinted in the face of high-intensity LED headlights from oncoming traffic at night, and these proposed LED lights towering above the trees will provide a similar effect. Despite the advancement of technology, we should acknowledge that simply because of physics, illuminating a stadium-sized field will have substantial impacts on the surrounding streets, houses and conservation land.

The presentation on lighting impacts was incomplete and not balanced. It is disappointing that after what is represented as years of planning and even a prior (withdrawn) submission to the ZBA, the petitioners did not provide data on certain impacts of the lighting. This makes it impossible for the ZBA to consider this project fully at this time.

2. Noise

Significant noise will arise from a field hosting adult and high school sporting events with 63 adjacent parking spaces. Noise will occur at the field at least through 10 PM and will not end upon conclusion of the events. Noise from the sporting activities and post-event gatherings will occur on-site, on the adjacent conservation land, and spill into the neighborhood (such as shouting and honking horns). This is a substantial concern to us, and to our neighbors. Many

teens and adults linger at a sports field after the lights are off, whether by moonlight or auto headlights. It is unrealistic to accept the premise that the area will quiet down shortly after 10 PM. Noise will undoubtedly be disruptive to the neighborhood.

These concerns were raised at the March ZBA meeting and the responses from the petitioner advocating for the project were dismissive and undetailed, relying only on the end time for the field's official lighting system.

Given that a variety of other factors were considered with professional assessments, for noise concerns to be ignored or minimized is unfair to the abutters and reflects an incomplete project plan. A proper noise assessment must be done, and a robust plan for enforcement after closing time must be part of the implementation plan if this field is to be built, including how the Wayland Police Department will be involved. The 10 PM closing time should be changed to an earlier time for any field contemplated in this small town. (A more sensible plan would be to pursue other options, including continuing to use existing fields in other nearby municipalities which would cause no disruption to Wayland residents and likely represent a substantial cost savings too.)

3. Public safety, parking and drop-off

Streets surrounding this site pose substantial dangers for the foot traffic and cyclists that this sports field will generate. Illegal parking should be anticipated and addressed.

Rice Road in particular is narrow and is intended to service a residential neighborhood, not a football-sized field. Walking or cycling along Rice Road results in traffic deviating across the median double-yellow lines by at least half a car width for the safety of the walker (see photos 1 and 2). In the area adjacent to the Loker conservation area, *it is not physically possible* for 2 vehicles and a pedestrian or cyclist to pass simultaneously. Currently, the infrequent passing of local traffic (which may include slow-moving mail trucks, and large delivery, oil and trash trucks) along the street requires one vehicle to come to a *full stop* to allow the other to pass when a pedestrian or cyclist is present. Adding this field will create a tenuous public safety situation on neighborhood roadways when players and spectators walk or bike to the field, or with drop offs on Rice Road or Thompson Street.

Players will certainly be dropped off along Rice Road or on Thompson Street so their parents can avoid traffic on Commonwealth Road and the busy intersection at Rice Road that often requires waiting two or three traffic light cycles to pass during busy hours which will coincide with prime time for field use. We heard three unrealistic responses at the March meeting in response to these concerns and we wish to offer a practical rebuttal.

1. *Signage will prevent Rice Road drop-offs.* This is not an accurate representation. From the proposed field, walk approximately 50 feet to the north and view the two "No Trespassing" signs along the aqueduct. Please reference photo #3 with a jogger and dog walker both trespassing despite the (ineffective) signage. Signs simply do not work. To operate on the premise that rushed parents with kids running late to their games will obey any signage is naïve at best.

2. *Coaches will supervise the arrival of players.* This is a fiction for three reasons. First, as the parent of children who participated in sports for more than a decade, I can confirm that as game

time approaches coaches get busier and cannot redirect the harried parents who ignore drop off signs and refuse to sit in (Commonwealth Road) traffic. Second, young athletes will simply walk around the corner or meander through the wooded buffer zone and enter the field *as if* they were dropped off in the parking area. Third, the field will be used for adult games; there is no one supervising them and they are the more frequent nighttime users. This amplifies the danger on Rice Road and noise in the community.

3. *The town will cancel permits.* While the petitioner stated that the town could terminate permits if the rules aren't followed, we are certain that the town would not withdraw a permit for an entire youth team or sporting league because some parents drop their kids off illegally. Instead, it will become an issue of neighborhood aggravation, and the petitioners have no sound mitigation plan.

Several areas on both sides of Rice Road are already used for parking by (illegal) aqueduct walkers (see photo #4). These areas will be used by participants in field sporting events as well. The drivers and occupants will walk along Rice Road to the field. In addition, when these areas are occupied, drivers hoping to park there for the sports field will be forced to make illegal U-turns in residential driveways on Rice Road, further increasing the danger and noise in the residential neighborhood.

Litter along Rice Road is already substantial, including alcohol containers. A sports field will surely increase the amount of trash, and adult night games will bring alcohol use. The trash is unsightly and harmful for the neighborhood and environment. Game time and post-game alcohol use ubiquitous among adults in the US. This will add to the noise, with drunk driving risks as an added serious public safety concern.

Thompson Street, a similarly narrow residential street is also used as a cut-through from the two schools on Loker Street. While Thompson is the intersecting street closest to the location of the proposed field, *it is not mentioned even once* in the 2018 Traffic Evaluation by Weston and Sampson. Building this field will dramatically increase the traffic on Thompson and presents a substantial hazard for residents. At a minimum, access to the street should be limited to abutters only, but as we have hopefully explained in adequate detail, the general traffic situation will not only disrupt the entire neighborhood from afternoon through late evening, but will create a substantially dangerous situation for the neighborhood children in particular, as well as for those attending sporting events at the proposed Loker Conservation area field. Once again, we support an alternative plan that does not involve building on this site; however, if the project does move forward, access to Thompson Street should be limited to abutters only.

Walking and biking are highly encouraged in modern communities, and in fact, many town and city centers (including Boston) are being re-engineered to support non-automobile modes of transport. Building a field here completely flies in the face of modern urban and suburban design, to the great detriment of the health of our community and our planet. Players who live near a sports field should be encouraged to walk or bike to the field. The Loker location presents an incompatible paradox.

4. Environment

It is well-established that developing wooded areas creates heat islands with adverse effects on local health and the environment. Artificial turf is known to get extremely hot during the summer. Development also impairs drainage, and with the increasingly intense precipitation events earth is experiencing, the risk for local flooding increases. From forest fires on the west coast to increasingly ferocious and destructive Gulf and east coast hurricanes, and record-breaking winter cold across the south, there is no doubt that destruction of wooded areas for development has disastrous impacts locally and worldwide. Surrounding municipalities, companies and even homeowners work to minimize their environmental footprint. In sharp contrast, this project represents the creation of a brand new source of negative environmental impact. To the extent other town fields have been overused, turning to Loker to overuse that parcel as well is not a sustainable solution. The town must consider the impacts from overuse and abuse of the adjacent Loker conservation land, from the construction phase to the intense use planned for the completed field. Recreation takes many forms, and while that includes organized sports, others already chose to enjoy this unspoiled corner of the Loker conservation area in other ways. This includes walkers and dog walkers of all ages, sledding kids and cross-country skiers in wintertime, and people picnicking on a quiet grassy area.

We have children who grew up playing school, town and college sports, and we understand first-hand the invaluable role of sports in the development, socialization and health of youth in our community. *We wholeheartedly support the efforts of the Recreation Department to find spaces for these activities and understand the limitations of existing infrastructure.* At the same time, there are community benefits from maintaining the Loker area as is, and significant risks and in many cases, unanswered questions about moving ahead with the proposal.

With the upheavals of this past year from health, environmental and social perspectives, it seems unwise for the Town of Wayland to grant this proposal, which will bulldoze a wooded area adjacent to a conservation parcel and impose safety risks in the community. We are hopeful the ZBA will block the harmful impacts from traffic and lighting in particular, and also to consider the environmental impacts and competing recreational uses.

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Photo#1: Rice Road. SUV deviating across the yellow median lines to avoid pedestrians along Rice Road (north of the aqueduct)



Photo #2: Rice Road. Rice Road. An SUV and a pickup truck as they deviate across the median yellow lines to avoid the photographer, standing on the shoulder immediately across the street from the proposed field site.



Photo #3: Aqueduct. Top image of a runner and dog walker on the aqueduct despite *No Trespassing* signs installed at every crossing; photo is taken from the north side of the proposed field. Bottom image is a close-up of the ignored *No Trespassing* sign (dog walker is visible in the distance)



Photo #4: Parking on Rice Road. View is from Rice Road facing south with the Loker conservation area visible beyond the guard rail. Cars often park on the shoulder, areas which will undoubtedly be utilized during sporting events at the proposed field.