

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## PZC APPLICATION



### SOUTH WINDSOR HIGH SCHOOL PROPOSED SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD AND TENNIS COURT RECONSTRUCTION

January 22, 2024

Prepared For: Dr. Kate Carter – Superintendent of Schools

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Prepared By: Chris Hulk, PE – Director of Design and Construction, New England

Address: South Windsor High School – Nevers and Ayers Road, South Windsor, CT

#### Project Description:

This proposal is for a plan to improve three major aspects of South Windsor High School; a lighted playing field, traffic patterns, tennis and pickleball courts. South Windsor Public Schools has worked for several years to identify issues and to determine how best to address them.

The primary issue is the need for additional athletic fields and an athletic field with athletic field lighting. Currently, South Windsor is the only high school in its District Reference Group (DRG) without a lit field. This requires students to be dismissed from school early and miss class time at both South Windsor and for visiting schools so that they can have adequate daylight for events. Additionally, many parents have to either take time off from work to see their child participate or to miss events totally. The school enrollment projections show that enrollment will continue to increase over the next several years. This compounds the need for additional field space, for traffic and parking improvements. School provided studies have shown that pick up and drop off times can cause significant delays. The South Windsor Police Department and the School have reviewed several proposed solutions with the most feasible being an additional driveway connecting the existing parking lot at the Wapping Annex and the student parking lot adjacent to the existing track. Lastly, the existing tennis courts were built in the 1960s and require significant repairs for upkeep. To address these issues a new synthetic turf field with athletic field lighting, a new parking area / driveway adjacent to the Wapping Annex, and new tennis courts are proposed. These improvements can be completed from late spring to early fall.

#### New Synthetic Turf Field with Athletic Field Lighting:

All fields at South Windsor High School were reviewed for their capability to increase the number of fields on campus and the ability to have athletic field lighting. By the Town Zoning Regulations, athletic field lighting has a 100' setback restriction to a property line. The only area on campus that both does not lose a field and has adequate distance to property line is the area adjacent to the Wapping Annex in the location of the existing tennis courts. All other areas would either lose existing field space or be too close in proximity to a property line to provide these improvements.

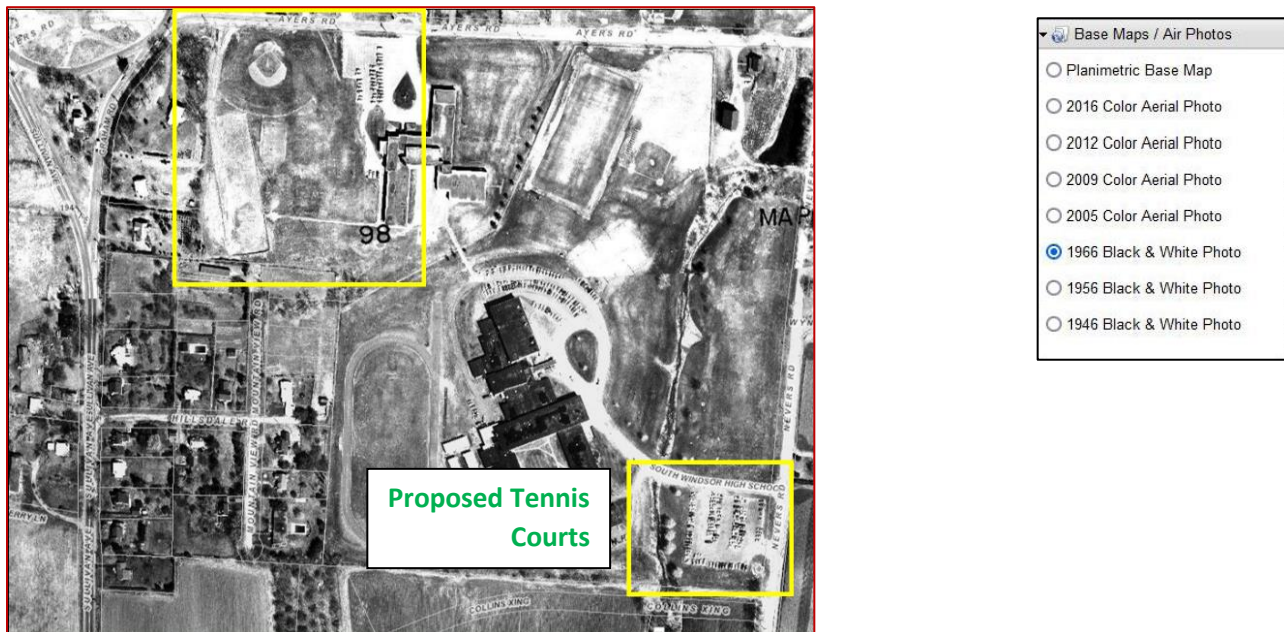
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The proposed field will include a synthetic turf playing surface, athletic field lighting, bleachers, press box, ADA accessibility improvements and space to accommodate for future buildings to support the facility such as a concession stand for dry goods. The new field will address the need for additional playing space with a lit field, and provide opportunity for the existing, heavily dated tennis courts, to be relocated and replaced.

### Tennis Court Relocation:

The existing tennis courts were built in the 1960s and are very dated and in need of extensive repairs. Additionally, the existing tennis courts are located roughly 300' from the nearest parking space and are at the bottom of a large grass slope. This makes them inaccessible to many people who would want to use the courts. Lastly, the 6 courts are not enough to provide courts for all team tennis matches. The tennis team has 7 competitive matches for each event meaning that one match must wait until another match finishes in order to begin their match. This will require all other participants to wait until the 7<sup>th</sup> match is completed in order to leave the facility. Below is a screen shot of the South Windsor GIS from 1966 showing the tennis courts being built and their proposed new location; formerly a parking lot and currently the grass field at the corner of Nevers Road and Collins Crossing.



The proposed improvements include 7 new tennis courts with nearby parking spaces, 4 new pickle ball courts and the replacement of the existing throwing events at the site. These new tennis courts will meet the number of courts needed for tennis matches, provide parking adjacent to the courts, accommodate the growing desire for pickleball courts in the community, and will be fully installed within the existing developed area of the site. This site was selected for these improvements due to its limited existing use, that it was formerly developed as a parking lot, and the proximity to the Community Center. This location will allow significantly better access for the community of South Windsor.

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### **Traffic and Circulation Improvements:**

South Windsor Public Schools has been reviewing the ongoing traffic and circulation issues on campus for several years. They have conducted numerous studies, reviewed the conditions with South Windsor PD, and reviewed with internal staff. They have determined that there is a need to have more flexibility in how to access the site, as there is only 1 driveway to access the School for emergency vehicles. Additional parking would be a bonus. The most feasible and effective improvement was determined to be the addition of a driveway from the Wapping Annex parking lot to the student parking lot adjacent to the existing track. This will allow the School to have flexibility on student pick up and drop off operations, improving emergency vehicle access, and increasing parking on campus and adjacent to the tennis courts. The proposal has been vetted with South Windsor Public Schools staff, South Windsor Police Department, and Town staff.

### **Summary and Construction Timeline:**

These improvements are planned to be constructed from late Spring to early Fall. The throwing events will be relocated and the new tennis courts will be built. Once the tennis season is completed on the existing tennis courts, construction will begin on the synthetic turf field and driveway improvement work. This will allow the tennis and track seasons to be completed without interruption, while also allowing the driveway improvements to be completed for the start of the school year. The field and lighting system is projected to be completed during September and early October in time for use for the second half of the season. This proposed timeline was found to be the most efficient to decrease any impacts on the athletic season and disruption of school activities.

The proposed improvements have been extensively researched by South Windsor Public Schools for a number of years. The new synthetic turf field with athletic field lighting, the additional driveway, the replacement of the existing tennis courts and the installation of pickleball courts, will be significant improvements to both South Windsor High School and the South Windsor community.

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### Zoning Review and Special Exception Application:

South Windsor High School is located in an A-20 residential zone and proposal improvements are subject to Special Exception as part of Section 3.1.1A of the South Windsor Zoning Regulations. Additionally, this application is seeking approval for Special Exception and waivers for the following sections of the regulations:

- *Section 6.3.4-3 'Recreational Facility Lighting':* **Special Exception to allow lighting poles higher than 35'.**

**Proposed maximum height of 70' for proposed athletic field lighting on multi-purpose synthetic turf field.**

- *Regulation: "Poles higher than 35 feet are permitted by Special Exception. An application for special exception may be approved after the Commission considers the impact on the following:"*
  - a. *Effects on the exiting uses in the area*
    - Reasoning: The proposed site has been in use as athletic facilities for many years. Athletic field lighting currently exists on several adjacent sites including the South Windsor Little League fields on Ayers Road and at Rotary Field on Nevers Road. Also, lighting currently exists on the existing tennis courts. The addition of new athletic field lighting to this site will not change existing uses in the area.
  - b. *Conservation of surrounding property values and character of the neighborhood*
    - Reasoning: The application proposes lights further than the 100' minimum distance to the property line and has gone to great lengths to ensure that no mature trees along the property lines will be required to be cleared. Also, an earthen berm with 10 screening trees is proposed along Ayers Road to help screen the project from adjacent properties. Due to the existing vegetated buffer being maintained, that additional screening measures that are being proposed and that the proposed lighting is beyond the 100' setback; the application will not have an adverse impact to surrounding property values.
  - c. *Impacts on the capacity of the present and proposed utilities, street, drainage system, sidewalks and other elements of the infrastructure*
    - Reasoning: The application has reviewed the existing and proposed utilities with Town staff and local energy suppliers. No concerns were raised regarding potential adverse impacts to the capacity of the utilities to support the application.
  - d. *Suitability of the land for the proposed use and any environmental impacts created by the proposal*
    - Reasoning: The existing site is currently developed with athletic facilities. The application does not propose any adverse environmental impacts to the currently developed site.

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- e. *Consistency with the goals and objectives of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development and/or Recreation Master Plan*
  - Reasoning: The application is consistent with the goals of the Recreation Master Plan. One of the major desires found in the public needs assessment was for additional synthetic turf fields and improved lighting at sports fields. This application would address both of those public needs.
- **Waiver 6.3.4-2 'Recreational Facility Lighting': Waiver to allow tennis court lighting at 50' from property line in lieu of 100'.**
  - *Regulation: "Poles are to be located a minimum of 100 feet from residential zones or property lines (where residence is the primary use). A waiver may be granted if this commission deems it justified due to adverse topographic or environmental conditions or difficult site configuration."*
    - Reasoning: The location of the proposed tennis courts is adjacent to an RR zone. The properties adjacent to this proposed tennis courts do not have residence as the primary use. The RR zone neighboring properties are the South Windsor Community Center directly across Nevers Road and a 'null' strip of property abutting the site, between the existing drainage swale and Collins Crossing. All tennis court lighting will be below the 35' maximum height for lighting. Along Nevers Road within the Town right of way, there are existing street lights and flood lights for the field. The addition of tennis court lighting would not greatly impact the existing character of this area.
    - Due to the current non-residential use of the and the existing lighting, the application requests a waiver to allow lighting for the tennis court to be within 50' of the property line rather than 100'.
- **Wavier 6.3.4.10 Minimum Number of EVSE Parking Spaces: Waiver to defer installation of EVSE spaces**
  - *Regulation: "The applicant may request to modify and/or defer the number of EV Charging spaces required based on site conditions at the time of the application."*
    - Reasoning: The application proposes 45 new parking spaces. 5 Parking spaces have been identified as potential area for future EV spaces. The application requests to defer the installation of these spaces until such a time that the Board of Education can evaluate the overall need for EV spaces at all school facilities and create a plan to implement suitable number of spaces per educational institution.



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- *Section 6.4.9 Modification of Minimum Required Parking Spaces: **Special Exception to decrease required parking spaces to the total under proposed conditions of 595 total spaces on site.***
  - o *Regulation: “The applicant demonstrates through actual experience that a lesser number of parking spaces will suffice, and further that due to the nature of the building or business, future owners/occupants of the building are also unlikely to need to number of the parking spaces required by the regulations.”*
    - Reasoning: The existing high school site has functioned with the existing number of parking spaces. The parking spaces proposed are to accommodate parking within the location of the proposed improvements and to supply additional parking for School use, as needed. Based on the historical use of the site the required parking spaces per the Town Regulations is not needed. Additionally, the parking spaces count is regulated by Office of the State Traffic Authority (OSTA) and will require their review and approval as well.
- *Article 8 Zone Change, Special Exception and Site Plan Standards and Procedures:*

**Review Criteria:**

  1. *The proposal is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Plan of Conservation and Development.*
    - a. **The proposed uses for this application currently exist on site and are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Plan of Conservation and Development. Tennis courts, athletic fields, driveways and parking lots have all existing on site for well over 20 years. The proposed improvements will enhance the athletic facilities, traffic patterns, emergency vehicle access and overall proximity of improvements to property lines.**
  2. *The application has met the requirements of the zoning regulations.*
    - a. **The application meets the zoning regulations and necessary waivers and special exceptions have been applied for.**
  3. *The land is physically suited to the proposed use.*
    - a. **The existing site has been in operation for many years and is suited for the proposed use. Athletic uses have existing on site for many years and the proposed improvements will enhance those uses.**
  4. *Minimal, if any, adverse environmental impacts are created including emissions.*
    - a. **The proposed improvements will have minimum, if any, adverse environmental impacts. The Inland Wetlands Commission has reviewed and approved the proposed improvements. There will be an overall decrease in storm water runoff from the site, the proposed driveway will improve traffic flow and emergency vehicle access and the proposed lighting system has 0 foot candles proposed at the property line.**

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5. *No traffic or other hazards will be created.*
  - a. **The overall traffic patterns on site will be improved as part of the proposed improvements.**
6. *The impacts on the capacity of the present and proposed utilities, street, drainage systems, side-walks, and other elements of the infrastructure will be minimal.*
  - a. **The overall net decrease in storm water runoff will not create an impact on the capacity of the present or proposed utilities. There will be no new connections to the existing sanitary sewer systems. The local electrical service provider has been contacted for their ability to service the proposed improvements, have visited the site and have not raised any concerns with the ability to service the improvements. The proposed application has taken into account forth coming Town improvements to the side-walks and will maintain or enhance the pedestrian walking patterns.**
7. *There will be minimal or no adverse effects on existing uses in the area.*
  - a. **The proposed improvements will maintain or improve existing uses in the area. The distances of athletic uses to the neighboring houses will be increased. The existing tennis courts that are within several feet of the existing property line will be removed and replaced. The new field will be over 100' from the nearest property line. The existing tree line will be maintained and various screening trees will be planted to enhance the vegetative screening to the neighbors. Additionally, a berm will be created and screening trees installed along Ayers Road to provide additional screening to the neighboring houses across Ayers Road.**
8. *Surrounding property values will be conserved.*
  - a. **The proposed improvements should not have an adverse impact to the surrounding property values.**
9. *The character of the neighborhood will be maintained or minimally disrupted.*
  - a. **The proposed improvements will maintain the existing neighborhood character.**
10. *The general welfare of the community will be served.*
  - a. **The general welfare of the community, School and Town will be served and enhanced with the proposed improvements.**
11. *There is a balance between neighborhood acceptance and community needs.*
  - a. **The School has worked with the Town to develop the proposed plans over several years and have reviewed the proposed improvements many times with the South Windsor Community. The proposed improvements will enhance the School, Town and Community and accounts for the balance between neighborhood acceptance and community needs.**

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12. *Historic factors are adequately protected; or due consideration to preservation of historic factors has been demonstrated.*
  - a. **No change to historical factors on site**
13. *The overall physical appearance of the proposed development is compatible with surrounding development and the Commission's goals for the neighborhood/corridor.*
  - a. **The existing athletic uses on site will be maintained or enhanced from the proposed improvements. Substantial screening, increased distances of improvements to the property lines and improved emergency vehicle access will enhance the overall physical appearance of the site.**
14. *The architectural design is aesthetically pleasing and blends well into the surrounding area.*
  - a. **The proposed press box will be approximately 10' x 30' and will little to no impact to the surrounding area. The structure is planned to match the existing buildings and press box on site.**
15. *Noise created by on site activities, including vehicle equipment noise.*
  - a. **The proposed improvements will have little to no impact on the noise created by existing site activities. Noise associated with existing fields, bleachers, parking and athletic field uses will all remain. The proposed improvements aim to improve any noise generated from the site. The tennis courts will be moved to the other side of the School to improve distance to the property lines and the pickle ball courts have been located as far from the existing property lines as feasible without impacting the existing wetlands or athletic fields. Speakers to service the proposed field will be located on the western light poles and aimed away from the neighboring houses. The proposed berm and proposed plantings will also be an improvement to the existing site.**