

Seminary Hill Association, Inc.
2115 Marlboro Drive
Alexandria, VA 22304

May 18, 2011

Alexandria City Public Schools
2000 N. Beauregard Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22311

Superintendent Morton Sherman and School Board Chair Yvonne Folkerts:

On November 17, 2010, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) filed an application for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to erect four (4) 70 foot lighting poles at the upper field at Francis C. Hammond Middle School (Hammond). The SUP application contains a short narrative in support of the application but does not address many basic questions normally applicable to SUP applications, nor does it address technical analysis of the effects of stadium lighting on surrounding neighborhoods or how it plans to comply with City Code. The City held public meetings to discuss the issues on February 8, 2011, and April 26, 2011. Neither the applicants nor staff disclosed significant new information during these meetings or stated plans to modify the SUP application slightly. For the reasons below, Seminary Hill Association, Inc. (SHA) strongly recommends and requests that ACPS withdraw this application before the Planning Commission hearing scheduled for June 7, 2011.

1. Hammond has been designated as an emergency response staging area, and there has been no indication that Inova Alexandria Hospital or regional emergency planners concur with the loss of a facility that is already used for urgent purposes;
2. The SUP application appears to violate City Code in at least three significant ways—exceeding height restrictions of 40 feet, exceeding setback restrictions of 25 feet, and exceeding illumination restrictions—thus requiring a variance at a minimum;
3. There has been no technical or economic impact analysis performed (Note: Arlington has decided against lighting athletic fields adjacent to residential properties and Fairfax has adopted regulations which effectively bar it); and
4. The City has repeatedly recommended against installing stadium lighting at Hammond and with the opening of the Witter Fields next March, the City met its recommendations of four lighted turf fields as explained at the February public meeting.

