

Tatlock Community Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 4, 2024 @ City Hall Whitman Room

Staff:

Mark Ozoroski

David Guida

Council:

Kevin Smallwood

Andy Minegar

Bob Pawlowski

DCP Advisory Board:

Sharon Clark

Mike Hoefs

Jenny Winters

Scott Lenz

Elaine Anderson

Aidan Gillepse

Eric Kurs-Lasky

Residents:

Peter Sobilo

Sharon Nash

Patrick Nash

Susan Thomas

Maggie Bauman

Glen Stroz

Myles Kalmanson

Paulette Strauss

Ben Strauss

Richard Gruber

Kevin Smallwood: Tonight, we will hear about the Tatlock Light Project. After Capital Budget Process there was some concern. After hearing concerns, made a promise to do small group sessions. Better than larger meeting if it were one large community meeting so we can hear from everyone Tonight we have DCP Advisory Board Members here who have been working on this project for years. Mark and David will give an abbreviated presentation . After that we hope to have a friendly dialogue. The point is to provide information and answer questions and hear concerns. We will continue this process for as long as we need to.

Mark/David Presentation based on slides

(<https://tatlocklightspresentation.my.canva.site/presentation>)

There are three definite:

- ☐ Traffic study
- ☐ Environmental impact study
- ☐ Field schedules/park hours

Mark: Specifically in response to Memorial field, we would not put lights on a grass field in town. Regrading would have to be done for the whole upper field due to the slope. Midfield lights would be in the baseball field outfield. This would cost millions of dollars. e fields need to be rested..

The County is taking back scheduling of Glenside which could over time result in less time for us at Glenside.

Kevin: We are extending the daylight for the youth programs. This is not a situation where there will be Friday Night Lights every single week. Football plans to continue to play games on Saturday afternoons, a 100-year tradition. Friday night lights would be a special event. During the week, the DCP/Advisory Board standpoint – having the lights is really to benefit the youth sports. Right now, High School and Middle School practice right after school because they are professional coaches. Rec sports start later because they are parent volunteers. In the fall, we lose time with the Youth Sports because of losing light.

When turf was put in there were promises that were made that lights would never go in. Smallwood and Pawlowski reached out to City Clerk and there is no written record. Mayor Jordan Glatt, who was quoted was contacted and confirmed that the promise would not go on when the field was turfed – it was not for perpetuity.

Mark: I want to clarify one point. I never said that we can't put lights on Memorial Field because the neighbors wouldn't accept it. The reason why Memorial Field wouldn't work is that it would be too expensive. We won't put lights on a grass field, and turfing Memorial is not an option. Memorial has grading and drainage issues, and it would cost too much to fix. We also can't turf parts of the field that are in the outfield of the baseball diamonds.

When will traffic study happen?

The traffic study will be happening in both the spring and the fall to get both seasons when the traffic study will be done. We should include a time when Summit is playing a town that will bring in a larger crowd.

Playground

On the slide, it states that Washington is would be included in fundraising because the PTA had already contacted the DCP with an interest. It seems like that was unfortunately misunderstood as Washington will need to fundraise for the whole amount.

We plan to follow the process we used for Mabie and all other playgrounds – grants, fundraising and city funds.

Would lights be fundraised for?

Right now, there is no capital money in the budget. If approved, most likely we will be asking for private funds and launch a fundraising campaign. Kevin also noted that we would need to work on lowering the \$1.6M cost.

Do club teams pay to use the field?

Yes, all players play a Field User Fee of \$20, being upped to \$30 per player and goes right into a field fund that improves parks/fields directly.

Biggest issue is not communicating with the public until now. I think the intent was to not involve us and push the project through.

This is not the intention at all. In the Council presentation (on the website) the slide from the study showing 27 options that were evaluated is included. The most viable spot was decided on.

Lesson learned in the process of Mabie and this process. The consideration on timing is having a plan that is able to be discussed and bringing it then to the neighbors. In the future we are considering ways to have a neighbor included in DCP advisory working groups.

What have other towns done? Have they kept their promises to the neighbors? I know you all have been talking to New Providence. Also, David works in Mendham, and they have had issues.

It is not appropriate to ask me to comment on another town where I am employed. Many other towns do have lit fields.

Resident Comment:

Individual living on Sheridan Road, who believes is like Lewis. They view Tatlock to be an extension of their back yard. Benefits of having this so close is great. Something being missed is the concession sales that go to SMPA, which is a source of funding. It is not just a sports thing, there are other touch points in the community. With Tatlock Playground, once they turn 9/10 there is no place to go other than a CVS parking lot. Having an area beyond sundown will give kids and area to be. It will be nice to see the field used more. With the tennis lights and the high school lights, we can see them but we do not notice them.

Daughter is playing flag football. It is an extra 20 minutes to go to another town to play flag football. Driving home and seeing a dark Tatlock makes her think this is where her daughter should be playing. They also think it would be nice to have the option for their children to use the field late in the evening, or be able to walk on the track at night.

Is there a possibility of doing games later in the afternoon on Saturday? In early fall, it can be very hot. Being in Marching Band, it would be nice to be a bit cooler. Everyone is doing lots of activities in addition to school. If Saturday games are a bit later, we could get our Saturdays back.

BOE manages when the games are scheduled within dictated available time.

The DCP does not schedule the high school sports, we just manage the field schedules. We can't control when games are scheduled.

In the initial presentation, Kevin said that the lights are for extending the daylight hours of youth sports. If lights go in, would the park be usable for residents to use late in the evening like the other resident is interested in?

Mark: Yes.

Are you saying that the lights could be on until 10 or 11, 365 days a year, even if there are no organized sports using the field?

Mark: Yes, it is possible.

David then clarified that it will be possible that the lights will remain on until a certain time during different times of the year.

For example – and nothing is decided – this is all a part of the conversation, it is possible that during the winter lights may be left on until 7pm to allow for walkers- This is a very hypothetical example. This will be part of the discussions moving forward IF lights are approved.

Resident Comment – I am not a sports person. I am engaging in more passive recreation. I enjoy using the park for all of these other activities. It is not a bad thing to have lights on. This gives them a place to play sports instead of going out drinking and partying. This can lead to more unorganized sports. Going to Tatlock during events makes me feel like there is a community. For people using the track, there are other lighting options as well that can be built into this. We want to lessen the impact if these lights do go in.

Resident: There is not a dichotomy. The track can be utilized during some games and practices, only not during Youth Football, and Varsity Games.

Can Tatlock to Greenfield("Cow Pasture") be used for youth sports activities?

Track uses this space for javelin and discus which leads to holes and divots in the field. There are also flooding issues. It doesn't dry out. We looked at this area to build, but it couldn't be kept in playable shape.

Can more drains be put in?

Possibly, but still have an issue with javelin and discus.

Mark - Grass fields in Summit are not the most playable. We need to work more closely with DPW and the BOE to better maintain grass fields.

Kevin – not a fan of the turf, big supporter of environmental, wanted to be on EC. We need to globally improve our fields.

Resident - There are springs in the fields and this does not make this situation easy. There used to be areas where the River Road would settle. Steel beams needed to be put in to avoid the settling.

Resident - This is not an anti-sports conversation for those against us. The issue is the area having 8 of the 9 of the tallest areas in the City. If lights go in, the only taller structure in Summit would be the helipad at the hospital. This is about us preserving and maintaining our environment. I don't see how there can be a compromise when one side gets nothing.

Resident → Resident questions – Are you worried about property value?

Resident 1 Response:

No. someone will buy my house.
On Butler Parkway all they see is

Resident 2 Response:

I live across the street on Butler, and I'm concerned.
I looked at what it would take to put 50 foot evergreens in. You can't plant trees larger than 25 feet, it costs \$500k per tree, and even then, they may not be viable.

Resident 3 Response:

I have friends who live by Montrose. There have been 4 houses torn down and redone.

They aren't by the lights

They are by HS Lights and by the parking lot at the HS

The conveniences of living by the park are great. I never had to drive to HS or Elementary School.. There's the good and the bad. Plus, I enjoy being in a vibrant community.

Resident 2 Response:

I'm not concerned about the current economy. I'm concerned about what happens if there's a downturn. I bought my first house in 2006 and got stuck in it. Ask yourself this...if there are 2 equal houses, one across from stadium lights and one on a quiet street, which is more likely to sell first?

Resident to Resident Dialogue:

R1: Came here not having a strong opinion. We walk to Tatlock and use the field occasionally. I have seen the signs with concerns. I came here to listen. I hear the pros and cons. The question I want to ask to people concerned – **what is your biggest fear?**

R2 Response It will mar the neighborhood. Summit has beautiful neighborhoods, and this will make this area not beautiful. It's just not good for the neighborhood and I know the kids can get by without it, an entitlement mentality..

Concern boils down to losing a beautiful view and a beautiful town. And traffic and garbage. It is just a bad look for Summit. It could set a precedent for Oratory, Kent Place, Oak Knoll

R3: Property Values and Safety

R1 Response: Can you talk more about safety?

R3: After dark it is a ghost town. Having sports after dark will increase traffic after dark and my street is dark. Our street lights are dim, and you can't see people literally across the street. We can't put light poles in front of our house because we can't install electricity. I haven't seen an ordinance, but I know a neighbor was denied.

All of the field light reports talk about spill light, but not about glare. A study was done in Fairfax Virginia, that discusses the issues with glare. Glare is caused by the contrast between the lights and dark. For example, when you're driving down the road and someone has those bright halogen lights, and you look at them and look back at the road, it's hard to see. Drivers will look at the lights and lose their attention. It introduces a new problem. I don't want to worry about sending my kids to Magic Fountain at night, and having a busy road with distracted drivers.

The neighborhood is not set up for this level of people.

Right now it's once a week during the day.

At Glenside there is a constant churn of traffic. I do not want to turn my neighborhood into Glenside.

Resident Comment: Summit won't let you put lights on the front yard, but you can put up 80' light poles.

Is there an issue with teams not playing or teams not being able to play the proper amount of time?

Combination.

Why not the other three turf fields in other towns? Kent Place has 2 fields and Oratory has a turf field. When I drove by Oratory on the way here, it was empty.

Kent Place and Oratory have said no to our usage in the past. We do have a partnership with Oak Knoll. It is an issue that will be revisited. All four schools (including Summit) use our track – but we don't use their fields. This increases the wear and tear on the track. Partnerships will be discussed.

Do the schools pay to use the track?

Mark: No. But it is something we are going to be discussing.

Maybe we should explore if there are additional fields where this can be done.

Resident: The reality is that there is a need. But we also need a compromise.

David: A thing lacking a concrete business case showing the need. We can admit that prior to starting this process, an in-depth sports field usage study should have been done. We know there is a case that all of the sports leagues have made to the Field User Fee Committee and to the Recreation Advisory Committee, but we need to be able to concretely show it, and prove it. We are doing it now.

Kevin: Goal of these first four meetings is to get the feedback from the residents so we can come up with a consensus. From DCP and AB there is a need for this project. Kevin and Andy would need to bring to Council. If we do, we need to make sure that there is enough information from the neighborhood.

The only way to gather information is to meet with the neighbors.

How is prioritization for playgrounds being done?

All playgrounds need work. Looking at the need, the Board set the priority as Mabie □ Tatlock □ Memorial. Mabie is at the center of town and will be 100% accessible and contain elements, such as musical instruments that foster sensory development. We are waiting on a decision about a grant that would award \$750,000 and then we could move ahead with Mabie. Then turn our attention to Tatlock.

I don't know what else was considered?

27 other solutions were looked at and eliminated. This was a slide in the Council presentation, and is available on the website.

Can we have more details on this?

For Transfer Station – there was a final report.

We will post transfer station report on the website.