

## ***DRAFT* West/Romig TCC Committee Recommendations on Proposed West/Romig Outdoor PE & Sports Facility Improvement Projects**

*Presented to the Turnagain Community Council for consideration April 4, 2013*

### **Summary of TCC Recommendations:**

- Request for the **Site Plan Review Process to go before Appropriate Municipal Commission(s), Consistent with Municipal Code and with Review of Other Anchorage High School Stadium Project**
- Request for **Revaluation of Master Plan Traffic/Parking Impact Study or New Study with Mitigation Recommendations & Implementation Plan**
- Request for **Site Plan to Reduce Stadium Bleacher Capacity to 1,500**
- Request for **Site Plan to Provide Adequate Handicapped Parking East of the Stadium**
- Request for **Site Plan to Incorporate Direct Pedestrian Access Between Romig and West, as Recommended in the 2010 West/Romig Master Plan, Constructed Concurrently with the Field Improvements Summer 2013**
- Request for **Completion of Noise Impact Study, with Mitigation Recommendations & Implementation Plan, Before Final Approval of Stadium-Associated Site Plan Projects**
- Request **Incorporation of Noise Absorbing Materials on Metal Stadium Bleachers and at the Romig Middle School West Wall Next to Stadium**
- Request **Press Box Equipped with Wiring for All Modes of Electronic Media Use**
- Request for **All Event Notification be Posted on School Websites**
- Request for **No Tree Removal & Review of Tree/Buffer Landscaping Plan**
- Request for **Track/Field Public Use as Condition of Site Plan Approval**
- Request for **Appropriate Review of Lighting Plan & Use of Energy-Efficient Bulbs**
- Request for **Installation of Dog Poop Bag Stations on Outdoor West Campus**
- Request for **Financial-Related Questions to be Answered & a Cost/Benefit Analysis for Stadium Portion of Project be Conducted**

### **Appropriate Municipal Project Site Plan Review & TCC Recommendation**

**1. Appropriate Commission Review:** Page 4 of the Municipality of Anchorage Planning Department Application for a Site Plan Review states, “The Planning and Zoning Commission shall review a proposed site plan for consistency with the goals, policies and land use designations of the comprehensive development plan and other municipal plans adopted by the assembly, conformity to the requirements of this title, and the effects of the proposal on the area surrounding the site.” A public hearing and request for a site plan review by the Urban Design Commission of the proposed West/Romig Outdoor PE & Sports Facility Improvement Projects is scheduled on May 8, 2013. TCC has not been notified that this project review will also go before the Planning & Zoning Commission.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** To ensure compliance with all Municipal Code requirements for a Site Plan Review, TCC requests **that the public/review/approval process for the Proposed West/Romig Outdoor PE & Sports Facility Improvement Projects be done by the**

appropriate Municipal commission(s) in a manner consistent with other Anchorage high school stadium projects.

## Traffic/Parking Concerns & TCC Recommendations

**2. Traffic/Parking “Reviews”:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Traffic/Parking Section II.a. states, “The project will provide a review of parking supply relative to the demand imposed by events that will be hosted at the new facilities.” Section II.d. states, “We are evaluating traffic and a review will be part of our application for Site Plan Review.” **How do these “reviews” differ from full Impact Studies?**

The Planning & Zoning Commission requested a Traffic Impact Study when considering a site plan amendment to allow for a football stadium at South High School; TCC feels this is an appropriate request for West/Romig as well, but *it should include parking because of the potential for parking constraints at this campus.*

TCC does not agree with the recommendation of the ASD, as stated in the Site Plan Review Application (page 14) that “we adopt a “wait & see” position and determine to what extent this [campus event parking on adjacent neighborhood streets] is a problem.” The 2010 West/Romig Master Plan and Turnagain neighbors have stated IT IS A PROBLEM NOW, during large or simultaneous events at the campus.

TCC does not agree with following statement in the Site Plan Review Application (page 14): “While this [additional traffic generated by the new field facilities] does affect the neighborhoods, the limited number of occurrences is considered of a minor impact...”

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** To ensure a full analysis of the traffic and parking issues and impacts associated with the proposed facilities and their use, TCC requests **either a full Traffic/Parking Impact Study be conducted, including identifying current traffic flow and parking issues during high-attendance events and multiple events at West/Romig — or a reevaluation/update to the Traffic Study that was conducted as part of the 2010 West/Romig Master Plan.**

**Results of this Traffic/Parking Impact Study should be available before final site plan approval for the stadium-associated amenities is considered by the Urban Design Commission and, if applicable, the Planning & Zoning Commission.**

*This study should include mitigation recommendations and an implementation plan, and TCC requests that these recommendations and implementation plan be added as conditions during the site plan amendment approval process.*

**3. Multiple Events:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Traffic/Parking Section II.b. states the likelihood of multiple events creating significant traffic demand is remote. However, TCC feels that the probability is much higher, given the fact that both West and Romig regularly host community events: West has an Auditorium with 2,000 seats, and non-athletic after school activities are held regularly in both schools, including regular use of the West Swimming Pool.

The 2010 West/Romig Master Plan states (page 10), “An analysis of Anchorage’s Title 21 zoning requirements reveals that current campus parking meets the requirements for normal

school operations. The current parking capacity is not sufficient, however, to handle the demands of large public events, particularly simultaneous events in the West Gymnasium and Auditorium.” According to the Master Plan (page 81), existing West/Romig campus parking capacity is 785 spaces. The Master Plan recommends parking event capacity be 1200 spaces — this recommendation did NOT take into account the construction of a football stadium at West/Romig, as this was not planned or incorporated in the Master Plan at that time (page 81).

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that **the Traffic/Parking Impact Study include a full analysis of cumulative traffic/parking impacts when both sporting (especially at the football stadium) and non-sporting events occur at the same or overlapping times at all West and/or Romig facilities, including non-school rental events, once the sports facility improvements are in place and put into use.**

*This study should include mitigation recommendations and an implementation plan, including that during high-attendance events, volunteer attendants provide parking/traffic control (similar to how traffic/parking is managed at Sullivan Area during during sporting events). TCC requests that this and other mitigation recommendations and implementation plan identified in the Traffic/Parking Impact Study are added as conditions during the site plan amendment approval process.*

**4. Capacity of Parking:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Traffic/Parking Section II.e. states, “Currently there are approximately 800 spaces available at West/Romig for parking during events. The Municipality of Anchorage Title 21 Land Use Planning code requires one parking place for every four seats for uses such as stadiums.” The MOA Title 21 requirement of four spectators per car does not appear realistic for a football stadium at West/Romig, based on personal experience, as parents often go to games directly from work in separate cars, or because blended families, extended family and friends, etc. attend games to watch one student athlete.

This also does not take into account **multiple-occurring events** at the West/Romig campus, as stated above. Again, see above comments on 2010 Master Plan (page10) that states, “The current parking capacity is not sufficient...to handle the demands of large public events...”

Currently, when events are held at the West Auditorium (seating capacity 2,000), parking regularly spills onto the neighborhood streets, both on the west side of the school and east of Minnesota Drive. It not realistic to think that the available parking space at West/Romig can easily accommodate 2,500 people in attendance at the football stadium, whether or not there are other events going on at the West/Romig campus at the same time.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** **In order to mitigate major traffic/parking capacity concerns identified by the 2010 West/Romig Master Plan and TCC during review of the PE/Sports Facilities Improvement proposal, in addition to TCC requesting a Traffic/Parking Impact Study, TCC also recommends the final site plan reduce bleacher seating capacity (see discussion below).**

**5. Seating Capacity:** Current plans include stadium bleacher seating for 2,500: 1,500 on the Home side and 1,000 for the Visitor side. According to the 2010 West/Romig Master Plan (page 65), the Anchorage School District Standard for High School Bleacher Seating is 1,000.

As mentioned above, when events are held at the West Auditorium (seating capacity of 2,000), parking spills regularly on the neighborhood streets, both on the west side of the school and east of Minnesota Drive. It is not realistic to think that the available parking space can easily accommodate a 2,500 attendance at the stadium — especially if there are simultaneous multi-events/activities occurring on campus.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** Due to the presence of both a middle and high school located on an under-sized campus — and to help mitigate traffic impacts and more realistically match bleacher seating capacity to the limitations of existing West/Romig parking capacities during large attendance of stadium events and multi-event occurrences, **TCC requests that the bleacher seating capacity be reduced to a total capacity of 1,500 people and that the site plan include this change as part of the amendment approval process.**

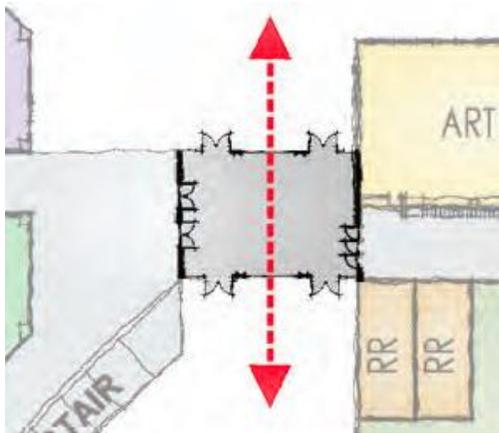
**6. Handicapped Parking:** To ensure ADA accessibility as close as possible to the stadium,

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that any amendments to the site plan **include location of adequate Handicap Parking in the parking lot close to the football stadium, east of the hockey rink and that this parking be included as part of the site amendments process.**

**7. Pedestrian Access Between Romig & West:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Community Concerns Section VI.g.: “How will you prevent parking in neighborhoods?” the response is, “Those lots [West/Romig] are closer to the field than any parking that may be available in the neighborhood.”

**More direct pedestrian access between the Romig parking lot and the Westside campus area is needed**, so that sporting event attendees do not have to walk around the buildings to get to the fields and be tempted, instead, to park on neighborhood streets, which could be perceived as being closer/more convenient. The 2010 West/Romig Master Plan addresses this on page 82: “Parking Access Between Buildings.” It states, “**The buildings, as currently designed, create a barrier between parking and the outdoor field complex on the west side of the Campus. The redesigned physical link between West and Romig could provide a direct way to move from the east side parking to the west side of the Campus for activities on the fields after school hours... This would allow patrons to use the east parking area and still have easy access to the field complex on the west side of the campus, further easing parking congestion on neighborhood streets.**”

The Master Plan provides a specific access project proposal in the Master Plan (page 82): “**With doors that secure both the north end of Romig’s “Main Street,” and the south end of West’s “Main Street,” large overhead or coiling doors could be opened to allow pedestrians east/west movement from one side of the campus to the other.**”



2010 West/Romig Master Plan

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that the West/Romig Outdoor PE & Sports Facilities Improvement Project **incorporate the 2010 West/Romig Master Plan recommendation to provide a more direct/shorter pedestrian connection between the two sides of the campus** to deter attendees parking along neighborhood streets to the west, rather than the Romig parking lot to the east, **and that this be constructed concurrent with the stadium, so that it is in place when the stadium is put into use.**

## Noise Concerns & TCC Recommendations

**8. Noise Impact Study:** School and public use of a football stadium, soccer field, and track facilities will likely generate a significant amount of noise during events, which will be heard by the adjacent Turnagain residential neighborhood. Noise from various sources, including a Public Address System, crowd cheering, foot stomping on metal bleachers, noise makers, music during halftime and other events, vehicle engines, and tire noise will all cumulatively generate a significant amount of noise.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** In order to fully assess the cumulative impacts of various sources of noise from use of the proposed sport facilities on the adjacent residential neighborhood, **TCC requests the completion of the Noise Impact Study currently being prepared by USKH before final stadium-associated amenity approval is considered.**

**In addition to the mitigation measures included in the Site Plan Review Application (page 13), the Noise Study should include mitigation recommendations and an implementation plan, (see additional TCC noise mitigation recommendations under #9 & #10). TCC requests that these mitigation recommendations and implementation plan identified in the Noise Impact Study are added as conditions during the site plan amendment approval process.**

**9. Bleachers:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Track Section III.i. states, “Stands will be aluminum with steel support structure.” (General comment: Any questions/concerns regarding bleachers should be moved to “Section V. Facility in General,” or “Section VI. Community Concerns,” as noise impacts have been brought up as a concern with metal bleachers placed at the football stadium.) Bleachers constructed of metal can result in high-noise impacts to the nearby residential areas, due to spectators stomping on the metal bleacher structures at football and other “high-energy” events at the stadium. While there is no way to prohibit spectators from engaging in this stomping activity, mitigations should be put in place to reduce noise.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that the project plan incorporate noise-absorbing materials be placed under the footrest and seating portions of the structure to mitigate noise impacts to the residential areas near the school campus. TCC requests that this be included as a noise mitigation condition during the site plan amendment approval process by UDC and P&Z and that this be installed concurrent with the construction of the stadium bleachers, so that it is in place when the stadium is put into use.

**10. Noise Absorbing Material for Romig Middle School Building:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Facility in General Section V.a. states in responds to the question, “Will sound bounce off Romig?” with, “Some will but is incidental compared to noise that is generated and directed away from the neighborhood.” This response dismisses the very real properties of noise and its “bouncing off” capabilities. Noise from the Home bleachers directed in the opposite direction of the neighborhood will bounce off the Romig building to the east and go back in the direction of the neighborhood.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that noise-absorbing material be installed on and/or next to the west side of the Romig Middle School building that faces the football stadium, to help absorb stadium event noise and reduce noise from bouncing back to the west, in the direction of the residential neighborhood. Options to consider could include plant materials and noise-absorbing paint or other available materials that could be installed on the building wall surface.

*TCC requests that this be included as an additional noise mitigation condition during the stadium-associated site plan project approval process and that noise-absorbing materials be installed concurrent with the construction of the stadium bleachers, so that they are in place when the stadium is put into use.*

## Other Community Comments and Concerns & TCC Recommendations

### 11. Press Box:

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** When constructed, TCC requests that the football stadium Press Box has adequate wiring to provide full media service for Internet, TV, etc.

**12. Event Notification Requirement:** Posting of all campus event schedules by West and Romig would provide nearby residents advanced notice of potentially high-impact events.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that West and Romig **maintain on their websites a full Calendar of Events schedule for all campus facility events** — including all other school or nonschool rental events, so that neighbors know when potential high noise and traffic impact events can be expected. *TCC requests that this be included as a condition during the site plan amendment approval process by UDC and P&Z.*

**13. Tree Plantings:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Facility in General Section VI.e. indicates that **no trees would be destroyed as a result of the sports facilities installation.**

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC supports this and *requests that no removal of existing trees be included as a condition during the site plan amendment approval process by UDC and P&Z.*

The response also states that a “Buffer will be added with new trees.” TCC supports tree plantings in appropriate places that could help with **aesthetics, drainage and noise and air pollution impacts from the sports facility campus (see #10 above with regard to noise-absorbing tree planting in front of Romig west wall).** “The West High School Athletic Fields Site Plan” does not include a Landscaping Plan that shows where specific buffer landscaping may be located.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests **review of a specific buffer and other landscaping plan for the West Campus area before final site consideration and approval of the Sports Facility Improvement projects.**

**14. Public Use of the Facilities:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Track Section III.j. addresses the question regarding public use of the track and field facilities when not used for scheduled events. TCC supports the ASD policy to allow public use of outdoor facilities when they are not used for scheduled activities.

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that **when not in use for regular school and other scheduled events, general public access and use of the West/Romig track and field facilities are included as a specific condition during the site plan amendment approval process.**

**15. Lighting:** The stadium lighting design includes six 70 to 80-foot poles (Applications for a Site Plan Review, page 9 refers to four, but we assume this is a typo, as page 8 and Exhibit F indicate six poles). Exhibit F refers to the Luminaire Type as “Green Generation.”

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that *UDC and P&Z’s review of the lighting design includes an evaluation of the pole positions and light fixture angles, to ensure maximum mitigation/reduction of sport facility lighting impacts on the adjacent residential neighborhood. Light fixtures should use maximum energy-efficient bulbs, if applicable.*

**16. Dog Poop Bag Stations:** Because the outdoor campus is open for appropriate public use, including dog walkers...

**TCC RECOMMENDATION:** TCC requests that the site plan **include installation of one or dog poop bag stations, to provide for dog owners to pick up after their dogs on the campus.** *Maintenance details would have to be determined.*

**17. Financial Questions:** USKH – 2-29-2013, Public Meeting Q&A, Traffic/Parking Section II.b. indicates that, “Varsity football will field teams at West High School approximately four times per year, possibly five should the team host playoff games at the school.” This information is provided in the context that traffic impacts (and presumably noise, parking and lighting generated by these events) won’t affect the neighborhood all that often. This leads to appropriate financial questions and considerations, considering Anchorage School District budget constraints and cuts currently occurring:

- **Of the total West/Romig sports facility improvement projects included in the plan, what is the construction cost attributable to the stadium portion of the projects?**
- **Has a cost/benefit analysis been conducted for the stadium portion of the proposed West/Romig sports improvement facilities, since it will be used so few times for Varsity football games per year? If so, what are the results of the analysis and are they available for public review?**

**TCC RECOMMENDATION: If a cost/benefit analysis has not been done, a cost/benefit study should be conducted before the stadium portion of the proposed projects is built, to ensure appropriate spending of public resources.**

TCC has concerns about **long-term funding for operating and maintenance** of the proposed facilities, given the ongoing ASD budget issues:

- **What are the estimated annual Operating and Maintenance costs of each of the new facilities?**
- **How do these numbers compare with current O&M costs of the existing West/Romig outdoor sport facilities, and costs associated with transportation/facility rental for “Home” games now taking place at other locations?**
- **How does West/Romig and the ASD intend to assure the public that once the facilities are built and in use, that funding will be available to appropriately operate and maintain the facilities for the safety of the users and to protect the long-term investment in the school campus?**
- **What are the anticipated O&M funding source(s)?**

**TCC RECOMMENDATION: TCC requests that answers to the above financial-related questions be provided to the public before UDC and P&Z consider final approval of the proposed projects.**