

Albemarle Supervisors approve second Polo Grounds Road soccer facility  
written by Newspark Team | September 13, 2012

The Albemarle Board of Supervisors voted 5 to 1 Wednesday to approve a special use permit for a new facility for Monticello United Soccer Club.

"All we're asking to do is to put some goals down on a flat piece of farm land and let kids play on it," said Pat Riley, president of MONU. "No structures, no irrigation, no lights, no sound system."

The decision came amid concern from nearby landowners that construction of MONU's proposed four fields and 96 parking spaces would add to the already heavy traffic caused by the existing Soccer Organization of Charlottesville-Albemarle facility.

Staff conducted a traffic study of the area following two Albemarle Planning Commission meetings this summer.

"[We] weren't able to assess [heavy traffic volumes] during this time period because there weren't any major events going on," said David Benish, chief of planning for Albemarle County.

Area resident Donnie Long expressed dissatisfaction with the study.

"Grant [us] the courtesy and the justice of having a true traffic study done ... now that SOCA is in session," he said. "The previous traffic study that I saw does not address what happens once SOCA is in session."

One condition of the agreement is that MONU is to refrain from playing games during SOCA's major tournaments, as well as during the months of July and August.

"The houses [in an area] generally generate a whole lot more traffic than an activity like this would," said Supervisor Dennis S. Rooker.

Riley said MONU has complied with all Board of Supervisors requests but added that it should not be their sole responsibility to solve the road's traffic issues.

"Traffic issues should not rest solely on our shoulders simply because we're the last ones in," Riley said. "In our opinion, we've done our part to mitigate the concerns of MONU Park's impact on traffic."

Other residents said the soccer complexes were part of a larger issue.

"SOCA isn't the only problem," said Polo Grounds Road resident Nathaniel Howell. "There's a rising tide of traffic coming from Route 20, too."

Supervisor Kenneth C. Boyd promised that he'd do everything he could to address concerns about traffic.

"I'm going to dedicate as much time and effort on my part, as I did with SOCA to correct that [traffic] situation," said Boyd.

Other members of the public criticized the proposed park's location, citing lax zoning regulations.

"I'm a little disappointed to see how relatively easy it is for the comprehensive land use plan or zoning to be considered for change," said Gerald Long, who moved from northern Virginia to Albemarle 12 years ago to avoid seeing "good land going to asphalt and concrete."

With respect to site-level plans, BOS members discussed the need for portable toilets and possible road surfacing materials for the park's driveway and parking, but decided to resolve those issues at a later date.

Boyd said that MONU has risen to the challenge of providing more recreational fields for the community.

"We've challenged them as a county to say we're not going to be able to move forward with fields, so we'd like you do to public-private partnerships," Boyd said. "They found a location that ... is not ideal maybe, but it's perfectly within the comprehensive plan for recreational services."