

Dear Edgewood Community,

When the athletic complex improvements journey began, I made two promises. First, I would respect the process. Second, I would respect the neighbors. I feel that I have done both. The last couple days have been extremely challenging for me. As a lifelong Madison resident who once lived in the neighborhood on Keyes Avenue and now as the President of Edgewood High School, a leader in education and community support in Madison, it was a difficult decision to file a lawsuit against the city I love.

Please understand that this was not a hasty or uneducated decision; the city left us no option but to file in order to protect our rights. We do not want a lawsuit against the City of Madison. We promised to do our best to avoid litigation.

Edgewood High School has always played on their field. They have also wanted to play night games on the field so parents and grandparents could attend. We felt this was our right, just like every other high school in the city, but as you know we have never had the facilities or equipment to be able to play night games, and now the city claims that even day games are a zoning violation.

We have devoted countless hours over the past four years to Edgewood's effort to hold our games on our home field. We held listening sessions with the neighbors to determine concerns and attempt to reach consensus. We studied and researched every single issue raised by the neighbors, and provided and paid for studies for every concern raised. Concerns included, traffic, parking, lights, sound and usage. We were also asked to meet with the Zoo and the Arboretum regarding animal safety concerns and performed an environmental impact study. For every concern raised, our results and solutions met or exceeded the city's expectations, standards, and ordinances. Traffic was an improvement since we were taking it off peak time and 100% of parking would be accommodated on the Edgewood Campus. In addition, we self-proposed restrictions for types of events, end of event times, and number of events.

Our findings and proposed solutions for our neighbor's concerns were then communicated to neighborhood committees and leaders. To-date, after two years of talking, the only feedback from the neighbors has been "no" with the admonition that Edgewood needs to come back to the table and work with them. Based on the extensive efforts by Edgewood noted above, we would say it's the neighbors who need to start working with Edgewood.

Everything changed in fall 2018 when the city told us we could not play games on our field when we had been doing so for nearly 100 years. When our girls' soccer team played a home game in the spring, the city cited us for illegally playing a game on our field. Nothing had changed, but the city decided to state that Edgewood's master plan needed to explicitly spell out all activities to be performed on the field and if an activity was not listed in the master plan, the field could not be used for that activity. This stance by the city was only taken with Edgewood. The University of Wisconsin's master plan lists several buildings, facilities, and open spaces that openly hold athletic

competitions, and even though UW's master plan did not list games or competitions as activities to be performed in those places, the University was never challenged or cited for holding competitions there. Common sense would define this as unequal treatment.

Edgewood submitted a light permit request in late winter. The permit was approved by the city, but the city refuses to actually issue the permit to Edgewood. This permit was a near duplicate of the Madison Memorial High School permit and done by the same electrical company with nearly the same specifications. Memorial's permit was granted; Edgewood's was not. Unequal treatment? Again, common sense says yes.

Edgewood will continue to work to achieve our goal of using our field for home games, including night games. The federal lawsuit was filed yesterday to protect our legal rights and to adhere to the timeframe necessary to do so. Filing is different than litigating and our continued hope is to achieve our goal without actively litigating against the city.

Let me clarify something that is being misquoted in the public. Our decision to seek a termination rather than an amendment to the Edgewood Master Plan was made at the recommendation of the City Attorney and Mayor in a letter we received on July 12, 2019, the morning after the denial of our appeal by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Mayor and City Attorney invited us to formally consent to the termination of the Master Plan and request that an ordinance be enacted to do just that. Edgewood accepted the invitation, after consulting with Edgewood Campus School and Edgewood College, and the Mayor sponsored the ordinance. Edgewood was clear with the city from the beginning that it would need to file a lawsuit to preserve its rights in case the ordinance failed to pass the Madison Common Council, and that we intended to see the master plan withdrawal process through. Unfortunately, and despite Edgewood's best efforts, the Mayor decided not to see the process through, and withdrew her support for the ordinance that would have eliminated the master plan and placed our school and our students on equal footing with the city's public schools.

As a community, we need to come together now more than ever. Please write the Mayor and your Alder, if you're a Madison resident, asking for their support to allow Edgewood to terminate the Master Plan. In addition, please share the information contained in this message with others in conversation so the facts are known.

The next step in the city process is the City Plan Commission meeting at 5:45 pm on August 26th in room 210 of the City County Building. We need a large show of support at the meeting. Next, we go to the City Common Council on September 3rd at 6:30 pm in the City County Building.

Thank you for your continued understanding, prayers and support. The goal continues to be the ability to utilize our field for the benefit of our students, neighbors and the city.



Mike Elliott
President