

SUNYA plans for field house stir concern in Guilderland

GUILDERLAND — A neighborhood group will ask the Town Board to meet with State University at Albany (SUNYA) officials about plans for a field house that the group fears will encroach on their neighborhood.

James Cameron, president of the McKownville Neighborhood Association, said Tuesday that residents were concerned the field house, which is expected to be constructed near the university gymnasium off Western Avenue by 1989, would increase traffic and create undue noise and trash.

"We're in the process of requesting the Town Board, through the town supervisor, to discuss with SUNY not only what the plans are, but what the possible implications are," Cameron said.

He said his group met several months ago with Lewis Welsh, the college's vice president for university affairs. At the time, limited information about the project was available, he said.

"We had an update and some assurance there weren't going to be huge rock concerts," said Cameron. However, he said his group still was concerned about the size of the proposed field house, parking facilities, and traffic.

College officials were not immediately available for comment.

Besides the proposed field house, residents are concerned about plans to relocate the Chapel House, Cameron said.

He said plans called for moving the house from 3.5 acres of land on the campus near Western Avenue and Perimeter Road to a new site on Fuller Road to make room for the field house.

Construction at the new chapel site is scheduled for sometime this fall.

"The concern might very well be: Would this provide further encroachment on the neighborhood," Cameron said.

He said the chapel was currently in a wooded area and that moving it to Fuller Road could worsen traffic.

"As opposed to expressing our opposition to anything at this point it's more of a need for clarification," Cameron said.

"Anything that might tend to attract even more traffic presents a problem. The traffic is not only on Western but on Fuller Road. It's a very much increased traffic load," he said.

Donald Reeb, a member of the association who also teaches economics at the college, said: "I would put a greater than 50 percent probability that they would put the field house on the chapel property if there was no intervention. I think the town and the neighborhood association will have to try to move it away from residences."

Reeb said the proposed field house might be as close as 900 feet to McKownville residences.

"We've taken the position that there are other sites the university has access to," he said, including one behind the State Police Academy on Washington Avenue.

"There are more than a dozen sites," he said. "That site is closest to the present gymnasium. Whoever was doing the planning was not concerned about the effect it would have on neighborhoods."