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**Subject:** Opposition to Marin Catholic Lighting System Project

Dear Mr. Ehlers,

I am writing to you as the Marin County planner with expertise and experience in design review and approval responsibility for the Marin Catholic (MC) Lighting System project. To be transparent, I live on Almenar Drive in Greenbrae and overlook MC's athletic fields. We have lived on the street for over 30 years and raised our family here. Our 3 children all went to public schools and while growing up all played multiple sports (without lights on the fields).

On its website, MC boasts that its athletic program offers "more opportunities than any school north of the Golden Gate Bridge"; finishes at or near the top in the Marin County Athletic League standings; with 29 sports, 49 individual teams and 85% student participation. With approximately 800 students enrolled, it appears that approximately 680 students participate in athletics, and of all the sports offered at MC, only 7 require a field (Football, Field Hockey, Soccer, Baseball, Lacrosse, Softball, Track & Field). Although I could not find a specific number of participants in each sport, *it is reasonable to assume that the lighting system project at issue will benefit less than 500 students*, at a significant cost and burden to our community in light pollution, noise pollution, increased traffic, decreased property values for the surrounding neighbors and no limits on what MC will do with the events these lights can afford as a practical matter. I say as a practical matter because the whistles and yelling at 6am summer football practices, honking and yelling in the parking lot after basketball games and dances, ping-pong of baseball batting practice throughout the year (not just during baseball season) and blaring pop music during games and practices happens regularly. This weekend alone as I was writing this letter there were cheerleaders practicing, a soccer game (not soccer season) and this morning before 7 am a lacrosse group practicing (not lacrosse season). Since the MC Fields are always locked, there must have been permission for these groups, and potentially fees paid to MC. My point here is that what is on paper does not stop potential abuses, there appears to be no way to enforce restrictions and nothing in place to prevent MC from extending the limited use...where does it stop? Likely with frustration, anger and litigation, costing the litigants, including undoubtedly the County, significant expense.

In reading the materials that were submitted on behalf of MC I was amazed by the statement that "a permanent lights solution is now a requirement to operate successfully as a school". Examples of how not having lights "hinders its ability to operate as a school" were cited, two of which include: 1) the Varsity Football team was forced to practice in the baseball field sharing the field with other sports and 2) the Women's Soccer team was forced to play its preseason games away so the Varsity Football team could practice on the field during the playoffs. Obviously MC can operate successfully as a school without lights on its fields, it is an elite college prep school that charges tuition and fees of \$27,600 and turns away applicants every year. MC has clearly made a choice to prioritize athletics, which is the purview of its strategic planners, but it is the school's decision and they should bear the burden of that

decision. If MC would like a state of the art practice facility, it can secure an appropriately zoned location and build it. But it is not appropriate in a residential single-family zoned district.

This project is referred to as a "Lighting System" and is significantly more than simply lights for MC's fields. There is a request for the four 80 feet tall field lights, but the request is also for a series of 16 feet tall pole light fixtures to be distributed along perimeter paths and around parking areas. I am no expert, but in looking at the elevations submitted, it appears that the 80 feet tall field lights are in reality 99.50 feet tall, significantly higher than the existing grandstand and field house. In addition, the photos in the lighting studies do not show what the lighting would look like from the neighborhood that overlooks the field, or any other neighborhood nearby and does not show the lighting along the perimeter paths and parking areas at all.

I also noticed in the Environmental Noise Study that measurements of noise used to support the application were taken during football games in October 2014-ten years ago (possibly before the grandstand was built)! Additional measurements of long term hourly noise were made in 2016 and short term noise measurement results were made during a Lacrosse game in 2016. Some measurements were taken in 2024, but at fewer locations and none of which were in the hills above the fields.

A question I keep coming back to is why should this community allow the dramatic change in the neighborhood should this lighting system be approved? Again, this area is zoned as a residential single-family district and there are neighborhoods of single family homes surrounding MC and will benefit a small number of students who would temporarily (4 years max) use them. Per a recent directory of students at MC, only a small percentage of students come from the surrounding area that will bear the biggest burden of the noise, traffic and light pollution if approved. Likewise, as a religious institution it is likely that MC pays no taxes to support this community, getting all of the benefit but none of the burden. This is while the people in these neighborhoods pay the taxes that support three large local public High Schools where the vast majority of neighborhood kids go to school: Redwood High, Tamalpais High, and Archie Williams High, all of which have large sports programs, limited field space and no lights. MC will undoubtedly also benefit from renting out these fields and in charging the community for attendance at their night games. Why grant a leg up to a small private school that does not contribute to our community when our tax dollars support a far larger number of students at the public schools?

To answer my above questions the Project should not be allowed. And as mentioned above, if MC has chosen to be the school that offers more athletic opportunities than any school north of the Golden Gate Bridge, they should raise the money through whatever means (i.e. alumni; endowment) and build a facility in an appropriately zoned location that allows for their prioritization of sports. Finally, there are a significant number of other reasons this project should not be approved, and it appears that not all of the relevant information is known by the local community. The most recent plans were submitted last month and there has been only one community meeting. Everything has been done in the summer, while many people are on vacation. I am happy to discuss this project with you, and urge you not to approve this expansion.

Janet Epstein