

School board likely to discuss issue during July 2 special meeting

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Three of the four light poles on Chase County Schools' new football field now have the approval of the Imperial Airport Zoning Board.

During a special meeting Tuesday night, the zoning board recommended the approval for two of three applications for light poles at the new field.

That brings three of the four poles into compliance with the zoning regulations for the airport.

The poles approved now include the southeast pole, the southwest pole, and the northwest pole. The board had previously approved the southwest pole at a height of 70 feet since the height and location did not infringe zoning regulations.

Prior applications for the other poles have been rejected because the height of the poles had violated zoning restrictions or flight departures paths.

During Tuesday's meeting, the board acted on the school's request for approval of the three remaining poles.

The board approved a height of 62 feet for the northwest pole, compared to previous requests at 70 feet.

The southeast pole was approved at a height of 52 feet. A previous request at 56 feet had been denied.

The board denied a height of 56 feet for the northeast pole, which falls under more restrictive zoning and departure slopes.

To comply with the zoning regulations and departure slopes, the pole can be no more than 41 feet high.

Under new bylaws adopted recently by the zoning board, they now only make recommendations to the building inspector. Nick Schultz presently holds that position.

Then, Schultz can decide whether or not to issue a building permit for the recommended project.

School Superintendent Matt Fisher represented the school at the meeting.

He said his direction from the board was to seek a variance on the northeast pole. However, zoning board members said that would not be possible.

Zoning Chair Kenny Owens said the communications with state and federal officials on the light pole height issue means that all eyes are now focused on what the zoning board does.

As a result, anything less than full compliance with local airport zoning regulations could jeopardize airport operations, Owens noted.

Two particular areas at risk include past and future airport project funding and instrument approach paths.

During the meeting, Owens also addressed the issue of why he had previously approached the school about the possibility of a variance or waiver.

Owens said he received a communication indicating that a higher pole height may be possible.

He shared that with Fisher, but noted he could have just sat on the communication. However, he said he felt it needed to be explored.

Since that point, Fisher said they've been exploring their options for a higher height on the northeast pole.

While it later turned out that such a variance or waiver wasn't an option, Owens said he felt full disclosure of the communication was the best for all.

Fisher agreed, noting that it was indeed the right thing to do.

With the rejection of the height of the northeast pole, the next action will be up to the school.

Fisher said they are planning a special board meeting for Thursday, July 2, to discuss the continuance of the laptop program at the school.

He indicated the light pole issue will most likely be discussed as well. No meeting time had been set as of press time Wednesday.