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St. Joe's seeks building permission through courts and zoning

By Derrick Nunnally

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The quest to build new athletic fields for St. Joseph's University on the former grounds of Episcopal Academy in Lower Merion Township is headed to court - and back to the zoning board.

St. Joseph's is trying both of the possible routes to win permission to build, after the township found last month that the university's plans to upgrade the high school sports fields for intercollegiate matches were too drastic to go without a full zoning review.

The university plans to put new field hockey, softball, and baseball fields on a 14.5-acre plot near Latches Lane that it purchased when the high school relocated to Newtown Square. But the site's neighbors objected that traffic and loudspeaker noise from the new facilities would burden them unduly.

The zoning hearing board ordered St. Joseph's last month to undertake an extensive review of its plans, but on Friday, the university filed an appeal. No court date has been set for the case in Montgomery County Court.

The university also plans to request a new zoning hearing, spokeswoman Harriet Goodheart said yesterday. Lower Merion officials said the school had not yet filed anything new.

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