

Middle School Field Project

March 23, 2011

The following information was prepared in response to questions posed by residents at public meetings since the capital budget was finalized and the debt exclusion question approved for placement on the April 5, 2011 Annual Town Election ballot:

1. Who has the responsibility of assessing the overall impact of clearing the land and putting fields on that portion of the Middle School site?

The Recreation Commission will engage a consulting engineering firm to complete the site assessment and design of the project. We are exploring the exact scope of any studies of the land required in advance of construction. The proposed parcel is not designated as conservation land; it is under the care, custody and control of the School Committee, which will need to authorize the construction of fields on the site. During the design of the fields, the consulting engineering firm will have to consider many things, including controlling run off, providing adequate buffer to the neighbors, etc. The Recreation Commission will hold hearings with the community as the design is finalized.

2. What are the concerns of neighbors and how can these be addressed?

The proposed use is consistent with the academic and extracurricular program for a school and thus consistent with the designation of the land. At least four concerns have been expressed at public meetings by neighbors:

- a. Damage to homes during construction from potential blasting of ledge thought to be present on some portions of the site or from stormwater runoff attributable to the removal of trees during or post-construction.*
- b. Additional traffic from field users on abutting streets once the fields are operational (both cut-through traffic and on-street parking in lieu of parking on the school campus).*
- c. Aesthetic impact on the abutters, and potential loss of property value.*
- d. Stormwater runoff negatively impacting Dudley Pond.*

Damage concerns. Our DPW director does not think we will need to blast based on the topography of the overall site and the proposed area on which the fields will be constructed. Many of the homes are located at elevations higher than the site, so flooding seems unlikely. Tests confirming these observations will be addressed by the engineering firm during design and site assessment.

Traffic mitigation measures will be considered in conjunction with the Board of Public Works and Board of Selectmen. Adequate parking exists at the Middle School. To a large extent, the use of the fields will be separate from school activity. There are many existing cut throughs in the woods now. If the residents wanted to close these, we

could erect fences or barriers.

Removal of trees and the loss of privacy are certainly concerns of abutting property owners. It is only natural that these residents would prefer to retain the wooded area behind their homes. We need to do whatever possible in the design to minimize the impact by leaving as many trees as possible and using the ridge line as a buffer and considering the installation of fencing. The fields will not be lighted.

As far as run off, it is a concern. The Recreation Commission has been advised by a member of the Surface Water Quality Committee that the fields could be designed to shed most of the water towards Snake Brook, away from Dudley Pond. Second, the flat surface may actually hold more water and slow run off from what is now essentially a hill. It would be just one of the engineering considerations to be reviewed in developing a final design.

3. On what is the estimated cost of about 500,000 based?

Gale Associates, the firm that did the report, included that figure as a conservative (meaning high) estimate. The firm walked the site and estimated the placements. Gale has over 30 years experience designing and building fields all over New England, and the estimate was given by their professional team. Obviously, we hope to construct the fields for less than estimated, returning the unspent balance to the town. If our detailed estimate comes in over \$500,000, we would not proceed with the project without further discussion at town meeting.

4. There was mention of ledge. Have test borings been done? What are the results?

Both the DPW Director (Don Ouellette) and Gale Associates do not necessarily agree ledge will be found in the area planned for the fields. In large part, it depends on where the fields are placed. It is also possible to fill rather than cut the contours.

5. What is the general assessment of the Gale Associates report? Some citizens have voiced concerns about some of the recommendations.

Gale Associates are a highly reputed firm. The Recreation Commission thought there were many strong points in the report, but we did not agree with all of the recommendations. We used the Gale Report as input, along with many citizens of the town through public hearings, to come up with a list of top priorities that we would like to see for the town recreational facilities. The Middle School fields are the first step, primarily because they will take the longest to come online - 3 years from go-ahead until they are ready for play.

6. Is there a way to revise the article so that money can be appropriated for the installation of two fields on the most appropriate site in town, contingent on resolution of the above matters?

We have already done the study, paid for by the town. We are woefully short on field space. There is money in the article to consider other parcels in town for additional fields, and also to look for additional sources of funding. The fields have been neglected for awhile, and we are trying to build a program to bring them back to the standards we would expect of a town like Wayland. There is no precedent for appropriating funds for an undetermined location and delegating the final decision on the site to a town board rather than town meeting.

7. Have teachers at the middle school and especially science teachers expressed approval of the plan? Are there science study settings which would be affected in the areas?

The project will not result in the removal of all the woods. There will still be considerable woods and wetland remaining after construction of any fields and we will confer with the Middle School faculty regarding the impacts of the project on curriculum opportunities.

8. The timing seems very quick, even though clearly work has gone in over the years to trying to look at the field needs issues broadly in the town. Is the timing adequate for a thorough vetting of the issues involves and obtaining feedback from stake holders.

It may seem quick, but we have been working on this, and discussing it with the community for a while. We included this very topic when we reviewed the Gale Associates field study in public meetings, and have talked about it with the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen in public meetings.