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Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2020 3:32 PM

To: Robert C. Zarnetske <rzarnetske@southkingstownri.com>; Town Council <towncouncil@southkingstownri.com>

Cc: Theresa Murphy <tmurphy@southkingstownri.com>; David Palazzetti <djpalazzetti@cox.net>

Subject: Recreation Commission Communication to Town Council

Rob,

I did not see an opportunity for public comment on the agenda for tonight's joint work session with the school committee, but I wanted you and the members of the town council to be aware of some related actions at our Recreation Commission meeting that occurred this past Tuesday night.

After reviewing copies of the conceptual plan for the CCMS High School, a motion was made by Commissioner Will Litvin and later approved unanimously by the commission that stated: (paraphrased)

Submit a communication to the Town Council regarding concern about the impact that the proposed high school project, as detailed in conceptual plans dated June 14, 2020, at Curtis Corner Middle School and CCMS Play Fields, will have on recreational facilities; and a recommendation that any plans shall include replacement of all recreational space and/or amenities that may be removed as a result of the plan. This includes, but is not limited to, the CCMS tennis courts and green space currently utilized for outdoor recreation including disc golf, youth soccer and other active recreation, that is proposed to be converted to parking and a new access road.

The concern expressed was that the planned entrance from South Road and the adjacent parking lot pave over a very active field used primarily by youth and school soccer and lacrosse teams and it also eliminates several holes on the disc golf course. It is perceived that the field was paved over because it was already flat and thus easily/cheaply converted into a parking lot. However, there has been no public discussion of a budget allowance in the high school construction project to replace those lost recreation resources. Additionally, the intended new site of the tennis courts also presents problems as it would require a reworking of the cross country course and significant site work to build a suitable tennis court in what the Park Director feels is very poor terrain and soil conditions to maintain a level court surface. The Recreation Commission fears that the cost of replacing these facilities will be placed on future operating budgets of the Parks Department, budgets that have already been flat-lined for the past few years; thus forcing a decrease in maintenance and improvement funding for all of our town's parks.

We further discussed that a work session be scheduled with members from the recreation commission, parks department, planning department, and the school building

department/school facilities committee in order to best position this overall CCMS High School and Park plan for success for all users of the community. Due to the terrain, wetlands, and ledge encountered during the original park construction project, making level fields on that site was not an insignificant task. It is our hope that by engaging the park staff who best understand that site, the school department and their consultants can find alternative parking sites and roadway alignments that preserve these valuable resources and do not push unfunded follow-on project costs onto other town departments or the town's CIP backlog. We are also hopeful that another area can be found for the tennis courts.

While we do not believe there are any grant restrictions on the CCMS property like we faced at Town Farm Park, we understand the development of this park site was funded by town financed bonds. Thus, we feel the responsibility to honor the intent of the taxpayers who supported the bonds by either retaining or relocating those playfields and not simply abandon them for parking lots.

It is understood that the CCMS High School plan is still conceptual. However, these plans begin to take shape in people's minds and what was once a placeholder often become part of the final design documents. Therefore, the Commission's hope is to begin these discussions immediately before project budgets are established and schematic design commences.

Thank you,
Dave
Chairman, South Kingstown Recreation Commission

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