

FAQ'S ON THE INSTALLATION OF SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS

Evesham Township Interlocal Services Agreement

On Friday, January 11, 2008, Evesham Township Council approved an agreement with the LRHSD Board of Education to provide \$1 million in funding to install a synthetic turf field at the Cherokee High School Football Stadium.

Following the Evesham Township vote, the LRHSD Board of Education approved the agreement at its meeting on Wednesday, January 16, 2008.

Q1. What is an Interlocal Services Agreement?

- A. Over the past several years, the state of New Jersey has encouraged local officials to enter into Interlocal Services Agreements to share a wide range of public services including library facilities, fuel purchasing and information technology services, to name a few. Through this initiative, communities gain better services and facilities while streamlining costs and helping to stabilize property taxes.

The state's Interlocal Services Act provides broad authority for any two or more local units such as, in this case a municipality and a school district, to contract with each other to share or jointly provide a service.

Q2. Is the sharing of services and infrastructure supported by public policy and based on sound planning principles?

- A. Yes. The following goals and priorities are taken directly from the *State of New Jersey's Development and Redevelopment Plan*, which all local, regional and state public agencies are expected to support.
- Provide infrastructure and related services more efficiently...by providing financial incentives for jurisdictions that cooperate in supplying public infrastructure and shared services.
 - Where appropriate, redesign existing areas of single-use development to mix and intensify uses to support a wider range of activities, reduce dependence on automobiles, and enhance cost-effective delivery of services.
 - Reduce consumption of natural and energy resources through design concepts, selection of building material and landscaping.
 - Promote Multi-Jurisdictional Planning and provision of public services wherever efficiencies can be achieved.

In addition, the New Jersey Department of Education document entitled, *Suggestions to Save \$\$ on School Budgets*, recommends districts "Participate in other shared services/interlocal arrangements with other school districts/municipalities, etc."

Q3. How will the school district and municipality benefit from the installation of synthetic turf through this agreement?

- A. The installation of synthetic turf will enhance a high school's physical education program, in which every student is required to participate. Additionally, 60% of the district's students participate in extracurricular athletics, such as football, field hockey, band, soccer, cheerleading and lacrosse, all of which will have an opportunity to practice, play, perform and compete on the new turf.

The municipality will have access to the high school field for the township youth and adult recreation programs when it is not being used by the school district.

Q4. How much will the synthetic turf field at Cherokee High School cost?

- A. The initial cost projection is approximately \$1 million, plus annual maintenance costs for grooming and routine maintenance.

Q5. Will the district fund any of the cost to install new turf?

- A. No. District funds will not be used to purchase or install the synthetic turf. The synthetic turf field installed at Cherokee High School will be financed through municipal bonds served by the township's voter-approved Open Space and Recreation Tax.

LRHSD will be responsible for routine maintenance, which will require less time than maintaining the existing natural turf fields. The district expects the cost of maintenance of the synthetic turf field to be equal to or less than the current expenses required to maintain the natural turf field.

The district will purchase a turf-grooming machine for a one-time cost of \$2,500. Yearly maintenance for each turf field will not exceed \$3,000.

Q6. Will there be an increase in municipal or school taxes to fund the installation of the field?

- A. No additional taxes will be required to fund the installation or maintenance of the synthetic turf field at Cherokee High School.

In Spring 2006, voters in the LRHSD rejected a budget question to fund the installation of synthetic football fields at all four district high schools. LRHSD Board of Education will honor that decision and *will not* spend district funds to install synthetic turf at any of the district's schools.

Q7. When will the field be installed at Cherokee High School?

- A. Installation of the synthetic turf field will begin mid to late June 2008 and must be completed no later than August 31, 2008, in time for the start of the school year.

Shawnee Turf Committee

On Wednesday, January 16, 2007, the LRHSD Board of Education accepted an initial donation of \$21,000 from the Shawnee Turf Committee to fund the engineering studies for the installation of a synthetic turf field at the Shawnee High School Football Stadium.

Q8. Why was the Shawnee Turf Committee formed?

- A. In Spring 2006, voters in the LRHSD rejected a budget question to fund the installation of synthetic football fields at all four district high schools. Following the vote a group of citizens in Medford and Medford Lakes formed the Shawnee Turf Committee, a private non-profit corporation to raise funds through private and corporate donations to install a synthetic turf field at Shawnee High School.

Q9. How much will the synthetic turf cost to install at Shawnee High School?

- A. The initial projected cost is approximately \$700,000, plus annual maintenance costs for grooming and routine maintenance. The Shawnee Turf Committee will be responsible for funding the full amount to purchase and install the synthetic turf. The amount reflects donated reductions to the cost of materials and installation.

The \$700,000 estimate includes installing turf on only the football field and is substantially less than the estimated \$1.2 million cost presented to voters in 2006. That plan was broader in scope and included installing turf on the entire stadium oval, refurbishing the track, ADA compliance renovations and minor bleacher work.

Q10. Will the district fund any of the cost to install new turf?

- A. No. District funds will not be used to purchase or install the synthetic turf. It will be funded by individual and corporate donations. The district will be responsible for routine maintenance, which will require less time than maintaining the existing natural turf fields and expects the cost of maintenance of the synthetic turf field to be equal to or less than the current expenses required to maintain the natural turf field.

The district will purchase a turf-grooming machine for a one-time cost of \$2,500. Yearly maintenance for each turf field will not exceed \$3,000.

Q11. What is the LRHSD's position on accepting a gift of synthetic turf fields at any of the district's high schools?

- A. The LRHSD Board of Education follows Policy #7230, Gifts, Grants and Donations, which includes donations of property such as synthetic turf fields. All accepted gifts must "have a real place in the educational program" and meet the requirements of the State of New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards.

Q12. What are the district’s plans to install synthetic turf fields at the district schools to ensure parity among all LRHSD schools?

- A. The LRHSD has no plans to expend school district funds to install synthetic turf fields at the other district schools. However, LRHSD stands ready to work with municipalities as well as community groups within the district to develop strategies to fund the installation of turf fields at their respective high schools. Innovative approaches may include Interlocal Services Agreements with municipalities, private fundraising campaigns or corporate underwriting, among others.

Synthetic vs. Natural

Q13. What are the benefits of synthetic turf over natural grass fields?

- A. When natural grass fields are properly watered and maintained, the playing surface is adequate. But, with a student population the size of LRHSD, it is very difficult to maintain grass fields in good playing condition due to frequent year-round use by a variety of the LRHSD teams and community organizations. By the end of each season, the fields are uneven and rutted, slowing play and, more importantly, increasing the risk of injuries to athletes.

Natural grass also requires continued turf management including watering, fertilization, aeration/seeding and the application of herbicides and pesticides in accordance with the LRHSD’s Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan.

Synthetic fields require less maintenance and when properly maintained, the turf remains uniform and safe, regardless of the amount of use and weather conditions. Additionally, during inclement weather, games can continue safely without increased risk of injury to athletes or damage to the turf. Drainage of water off the field is greatly enhanced.

The Synthetic Turf Council reports, “Synthetic turf fields are typically warranted for about 3,000 hours of play per year, with no “rest” required. For schools with sufficient land and resources, it would take three or four natural turf fields to withstand the usage of one synthetic turf field.”

Q14. Is synthetic turf the same as AstroTurf?

- A. Today’s synthetic turf has improved in the more than 40 years since AstroTurf was first installed in the Astrodome in Houston, Texas. The synthetic turf proposed for LRHSD is more stable and resilient as well as less abrasive than AstroTurf, which was often considered too hard to play on and caused injuries.

Modern synthetic turf is made of recycled materials, such as tires, and engineered to more closely resemble the look and feel of natural grass.

Effect on Athletes/Athletic Programs

Q15. What programs would benefit from the installation of a turf field?

- A. The installation of synthetic turf will enhance a high school's physical education program, in which every student is required to participate. Additionally, 60% of the district's students participate in extracurricular athletics, such as football, field hockey, band, soccer, cheerleading and lacrosse, all of which will have an opportunity to practice, play, perform and compete on the new turf.

Q16. How will a synthetic field affect the level of play?

- A. Synthetic turf is durable, consistent and safe, regardless of weather conditions or extensive use. It's an excellent alternative to natural grass, which can become pitted and damaged due to inclement weather or extensive use, in turn, leading to injuries.

Field hockey and soccer players report that the level of play is faster, more challenging and also more consistent on synthetic turf.

Current and Future Expenses

Q17. If private, nonprofits at any of the LRHSD schools are successful in raising the initial funds to install a synthetic turf field, what entity will be responsible for the annual maintenance and other related future costs?

- A. According to the LRHSD Board of Education Policy #7230, the district will accept "the responsibility of maintaining the utility of the gift." The district expects the cost of maintenance of the synthetic turf field to be equal to or less than the current expenses required to maintain the natural turf field.

According to the Synthetic Turf Council, "Natural turf fields require approximately 70,000 gallons of irrigation water each week, approximately 15 to 20 pounds of fertilizer each year per 1,000 square feet of turf, plus herbicides and pesticides. Synthetic turf maintenance costs are two to three times less than natural turf. No mowing, irrigation or chemicals are required."

Q18. Will the coaches and grounds crews require special training to maintain the fields? If so, who will pay for this training? How often will it be needed?

- A. Coaches and grounds crews will receive extensive, complimentary training from the synthetic turf field manufacturer selected to install the field. Additionally, colleges and universities as well as organizations like the Synthetic Turf Council provide educational materials about the short and long-term maintenance of synthetic turf.

The manufacturer will provide additional infill material for any necessary repairs to the surface.

Q19. How often will the synthetic turf fields need to be replaced? What are the replacement costs?

- A. On average, synthetic turf fields need to be replaced every 10 years. In current dollars the cost for removal and disposal of the worn synthetic turf and the purchase and re-installation of a new surface will total approximately \$381,000.

LRHSD will work with municipalities and community groups to develop strategies to plan for and fund turf field replacement costs at their respective high schools. The district will look for innovative approaches, which may include Interlocal Service Agreements with municipalities, private fundraising campaigns or corporate underwriting, among others.

Environment

Q20. Does synthetic turf have an impact on the environment?

- A. The LRHSD complies with the IPM in effect at each of its high schools. However, synthetic turf fields require no watering or use of fertilizer, herbicide or pesticides to maintain an adequate playing surface for sports and extracurricular activities. The district will conserve water and reduce the amount of runoff into the region's lakes and streams.

According to the Synthetic Turf Council, "Synthetic turf is environmentally friendly in origin, application, use, disposal, sustainability and water conservation. The granulated tire rubber used as infill recycles 25 million used auto tires per year that would otherwise end up in U.S. landfills."

Recycled tire rubber has been used in synthetic turf sports fields since about 1997, and in playgrounds and tracks for much longer. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been one of its biggest proponents – the agency's position is that scrap tires are not a hazardous waste and recommends using crumb material from granulated used tires for playgrounds, running tracks and sports fields.

Health and Injuries

Q21. Do athletes sustain more frequent and more serious injuries on synthetic turf?

- A. Advances in the manufacture and installation of today's synthetic fields have led to safer playing surfaces in terms of athletes sustaining orthopedic injuries (traumatic and chronic). Recent research has shown no difference in frequency and severity of injury rates between turf and grass fields.

Several medical journals have reported, and anecdotal evidence suggests, that athletes who fall on synthetic turf are more likely to sustain minor skin burns.

Q22. What types of studies were done to reach the above conclusion?

- A. The results of a five-year study of football played in 240 games at eight high schools on synthetic turf and grass fields reported in “The American Journal of Sports Medicine” found that the rate of injuries on modern synthetic turf fields and on well-maintained grass fields is essentially equal.

Q23. Are there any other health concerns related to the use of synthetic turf fields?

- A. During the past decade, much independent, credible research about synthetic turf has been conducted worldwide and is ongoing. Third-party scientists, international sports organizations (such as FIFA, the international governing body on soccer), trade institutes and others have found, through their exhaustive studies, that the benefits of synthetic turf surfaces are numerous and pose no danger to human health or the environment.

Foreign countries and various states including Norway, Sweden, New Jersey and California have recently reviewed the health issues; their assessments have not found a public health threat.

Scientists internationally have spent much time investigating the impact of synthetic turf on human health. During the 2006 meeting of the International Association of Sport Surface Sciences, an independent technical organization, multiple studies evaluated its effect on factors like water run-off, air, skin contact (allergy), ingestion, etc. Those reports, each independently conducted by various countries, further substantiate the safety and minimal risks in synthetic turf usage.

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