

MEMORANDUM

TO: BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
FROM: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
SUBJECT: TRACK PROJECT  
DATE: 3/10/2010

The purpose of this memo is to fully describe the Parks and Recreation Commission's position on the proposed track facility.

We would like to commend the Littleton Track Organization for their hard work and dedication to track athletes and the facility as a whole. Their commitment to this project has been second-to-none, and we would like to recognize their ambitions and accomplishments over this past year. In addition, the Commission fully supports the idea that there is a need for a new track facility and recognizes that the current track is inadequate on several levels and borders on unsafe.

That being said, the Commission is in agreement that it will *not* sponsor a warrant article for Town Meeting this year, 2010. First and foremost in our reasoning is that the Commission does not believe it is the proper authority to sponsor such an article. PRCE does not currently run, nor does it plan to run in the foreseeable future, any track and field or related programs. The only track and field programs currently in the community are sponsored by the School Department. It is the Commission's belief that the School Department would be a more logical sponsor for the article.

Secondarily, the Commission also believes that their sponsorship would send the message that it was the Commission's belief that the track article should take priority over the many other capital plan requests currently pending. The Commission is aware of and has reviewed the 10 Year Capital Plan requests. With the knowledge of the current financial situation of the town in which most departments are forced to level fund at a reduction of services as well as the current state of the economy, the Commission believes it would be inappropriate, at this time, to actively sponsor a warrant article which would result in an increase in property taxes. In this case, the Commission believes that sponsorship of such an article should be left to the policy making bodies of the town government, particularly for a new facility with a very limited user group.

The Commission also has several concerns with the prospective track plan, primarily centering on the maintenance of any new facility. As we are sure you are aware, maintenance costs for the fields (not including personnel costs which are subsidized by the Highway Department) are 100% funded by user fees from the Parks, Recreation and Community Education Revolving Accounts. Last year's maintenance costs to the Department were approximately \$26,000.00; we are projecting approximately \$27,500 for Fiscal Year 2011. Funds raised from property taxes are *not* provided to PRCE for field maintenance.

Based on cost estimates from vendors and communities with similar track facilities, annual maintenance costs for the track only option (Option 1) would be \$7,500 for re-striping every three years, \$15,000 for recoating after five years and \$35,000 for a second recoating and rubber lift in the tenth year. Annualized with funds set in reserve each year for the projected 10 year maintenance costs of \$57,500 this would add more than 20% to the current town-wide field maintenance budget for a program with approximately 60 participants. The cost estimates for the track/synthetic turf option (Option 2A) would include the \$57,500 for the track over 10 years as well as an additional \$780,000 over 15 years (annualized to \$52,000 to be reserved each year).

Maintenance fees are assessed to each of the in-town programs, sponsored or run through PRCE, which utilize our fields, paid for from their user registration fees. As PRCE does not run or sponsor the field and track program, it is run through the School Department, PRCE has no mechanism for collecting any maintenance costs which would be incurred by the new track facility. The Commission will not support an increase in maintenance assessments to other programs to defray the maintenance costs of any additional infrastructure not used by those programs.

We are aware that there have been several discussions between the Littleton Track Organization and other entities within the Town regarding the raising of maintenance funds via fundraising and donations. The Commission does not believe the idea of maintenance funds being 'raised' or subsidized by volunteers is a viable or acceptable solution. There may be an enthusiastic base of ardent supporters willing to donate time and money today. However, what will happen in 3,5 and 10 years when the excitement of a new track has waned and the maintenance fundraising is simply another request for donations along with baseball and softball Can Day, Girl Scout Cookies, PTO fundraising, etc. While we, again, applaud the efforts of the LTO, we cannot rely on volunteers and fundraising to take care of Town-owned properties. A permanent source of maintenance funding must be identified prior to the addition of a new facility.

We also attended the PMBC meeting last month and expressed our concerns to that group. They seemed generally frustrated with our take on the situation and wished that we, as a group, would voice which 'plan' we were in favor of. At this time, we support no specific plan and would like to share with you the same questions which we posed to them, most noted earlier in this memorandum:

1. We believe we are not the correct group to even sponsor this warrant article. At this time, we do not have a track program and have no plans to have a Recreation track program anytime in the future. The main user of the track facility is the School Department.
2. Who is to decide if this project supersedes all those which are posed in the Capital Improvement Plan each year? Many Departments, including ours, have proposed projects scheduled as far as 10 years out. Which projects must wait so this will "jump ahead" in line?
3. Who will be responsible for maintenance, scheduling and Capital planning for this site? As of now, PRCE has taken that role for all fields in town, including those on school grounds. We do not have a track program and have no interest in being the custodian for another property.
4. Will maintenance costs be allocated from Town funds each year for this site? If these funds are available, why they were not allocated to the existing fields and facilities that are currently maintained by user fees alone.
5. Will the track facility be open to the public as is the current facility except when is use by sponsored/sanctioned activities? Members of the public have expressed concern that a new facility with restricted usage does not truly serve the community as a whole, particularly at the proposed cost levels.

The Commission acknowledges that the current track facility is inadequate and that a new track would be an enhancement to the community. Our concerns are that the selection of this project at the expense of other projects in Town should be made by a policy making body and that the costs of maintaining a new facility have been inadequately addressed.