

MINUTES

AMITY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Patricia Cardozo, Sue Cohen, Rita Gedansky, John A. Grasso, James Stirling Thomas Hurley, Diane Crocco, Steven DeMaio, Tracey Lane Russo, Christopher Browe

AMITY BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:

William Blake, Julie Altman, James Horwitz

Staff Members Present: John Brady, Jack Levine, Paul Mengold, Marie McPadden, Charles Britton, Bert Mozealous, Pua Ford

Also Present: members of the Public, members of the press

A public hearing of the Amity Regional School District No. 5 was held on Tuesday, May 21, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. in the Presentation Room at the District Offices.

1. **Call to Order:** Sue Cohen called the District Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. **To Consider and Act upon Resolutions with Respect to an Appropriation and Borrowing Authorization for Costs Related to Replacement of the Current Natural Grass Field at the Amity Regional High School Football Stadium with an Artificial Turf Field; and the Calling of a District Referendum Thereon**

Ms. Cohen explained the purpose of the hearing and asked Athletic Director Paul Mengold to recap the proposed project.

Mr. Mengold recapped the history of discussion around an artificial turf field, beginning in 2004 with a proposal to the Board. He reviewed debunked reports on harmful effects of such fields (carcinogenic materials, increased injuries, etc.) and how the state Attorney General's moratorium on installing artificial turf was later lifted. He went over the wet conditions of the current grass field, how heavy use by both Amity and community youth football games damaged the field and led to more athletic injuries.

Most other sports teams play on synthetic turf fields at other schools; in Amity's DRG only one other school does not have a synthetic turf field. The National Football League uses synthetic turf and would not risk their highly paid players if these fields were dangerous. Yale University is installing two more such fields. Synthetic turf does not freeze and so is less hard than a frozen grass field. Such a field at Amity could be used by many other sports besides football.

Questions: In response to earlier comments, that bonding for the project would go on longer (20 years) than the lifetime of the artificial turf, Mr. Mengold that proper installation of the underlying structure for drainage would last longer than the 12-year surface material. Technology is improving as time goes on, and vendors want to sell durable goods. Economically this is a good time to go out to bid for the project. Mr. Hurley asked

Michael Luther (Woodbridge) asked about the proposed annual cost of maintaining this field. Jack Levine said the facilities director estimates less than \$33,000, aside from the debt service. Mr. Luther that increasing debt service was a problem for Woodbridge and that it should be no more than 10% of an operating budget. Considering the hard economic times on Amity families, he hoped that this project might wait a little longer for economic improvement. He asked if there

would be other presentations to the public; this project was presented publicly at Amity Board meetings in January and May.

Greg Laugeni (Woodbridge, Amity Class of '82) agreed that times were tough economically. He said that in 2004 this project had potential corporate sponsors, but everyone understood that air quality and the building renovation bonds came first. He believes the time has come to take this to the people for a vote. Many public meetings and presentations were publicized in the past year. Private fundraising was attempted before this. All the Amity schools have outstanding facilities. The fields for softball, baseball, soccer and lacrosse have been improved, but not the practice football field which was used for parking during the high school renovation. He understands that the synthetic field will be multi-purpose field—for other sports, for the Relay for Life, for the band & dance team. Just let the voters choose. He has heard that the cost per household would be \$3.90 to \$4 annually.

Sheila McCreven (Woodbridge) asked about assessing equity in use of a new field, especially in light of Title IX. Mr. Mengold referred to his presentation at the January Board meeting; this included a schedule that addressed this.

Tom Kenefick (Woodbridge) said he understands Mr. Luther's concern with costs. His experience leads him to favor the project. He likes the new artificial turf fields, which are more level and "faster" than grass fields. He believes the fields encourage the students to play more, into their college years. He testified to the unsafe conditions of the current field at the end of the football season. A multi-use field in the stadium also benefits other sports teams because they can use the cooking facilities for special events to raise funds.

3. Adjournment

The hearing was closed at 6:00 p.m.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:07 p.m. (John Grasso, 2d Thomas Hurley).

Approval unanimous.

Motion passed; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Rita Gedansky, secretary
Pua Ford, recording clerk