

State Environmental Quality Review

**NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

Notice of Determination of Non-Significance

**Board of Education  
Chester Union Free School District  
Orange County, New York**

**Date:** October 8, 2025

This notice is issued pursuant to Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law (State Environmental Quality Review Act).

An analysis of potential environmental impacts of the Interscholastic Athletic Facility was undertaken based on the recommended construction and improvements. The District has evaluated the Project with the appropriate environmental review process and procedures as required for a Type 1 Action, performed their due diligence in taking the required “hard look” at the proposed work to determine if it may be deemed as having any significant adverse environmental impact.

Based upon this review, the Board of Education of the Chester Union Free School District has determined that the implementation of the Project, as described in the Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) documentation, **will not result in any significant adverse environmental impact** and that a SEQRA Negative Declaration will be made to conclude the SEQRA process.

**Lead Agency:** Chester Union Free School District  
64 Hambletonian Drive  
Chester, New York  
Phone: (845) 469-5052  
Contact: Catherine O’Hara, Superintendent of Schools

**Name of Action:** New Interscholastic Athletic Facility

**SEQRA Status:** Type 1

**Conditioned**

**Negative Declaration:** No

**Description of the**

**Action:** The Chester Union Free School District seeks permission of the voters to undertake a capital project consisting of construction of an Interscholastic Athletic Facility on vacant land between Chester Academy and Chester Elementary School, consisting of a multi-purpose synthetic turf field within an eight-lane track, dedicated areas for track and field events, field house with locker rooms, public restrooms, secure storage, and meeting rooms, grandstand and/or bleacher seating, press box, concession stand, lighting, scoreboard, PA and sound system, and perimeter fencing, including original, equipment, machinery, apparatus, appurtenances, site work and incidental improvements in connection therewith.

**Location:** Hambletonian Avenue – vacant land between Chester Academy and Chester Elementary School

The District’s decision to make this Negative Declaration is based upon careful and deliberate review of the information gathered in the preparation of the EAF. The following presents a reasoned elaboration of each of the environmental criteria reviewed within Part 2 of the EAF

**Reasons Supporting This Determination:**

According to Part 2 of the EAF, there are no moderate to large environmental impacts. The Project is not anticipated to result in a significant adverse impact on the environment based upon the following reasons:

**1. Impact on Land**

The proposed work includes temporary ground disturbances that will result from removal of natural materials and construction of a multi-purpose synthetic turf field within an eight-lane track, field house with locker rooms, public restrooms, secure storage, and meeting rooms, grandstand and/or bleacher seating, press box, concession stand, lighting,

There are no impacts under Section 1(a), 1(c), 1(d) and 1(g).

The small impacts on land that are identified are due to:

**1(b) The proposed action may involve construction on slopes of 15% or greater.** The site contains slopes of 15% or greater. All disturbed areas, including steep slopes, will be stabilized in accordance with NYS Standards for Erosion and Sediment Control and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Stormwater Management Design Manual.

**1(e) The proposed action may involve construction that continues for more than one year or in multiple phases.** The overall work associated with the Project may continue for more than one year and precautions will be implemented during the period of construction.

**1(f) The proposed action may result in increased erosion, whether from physical disturbance or vegetation removal (including from treatment with herbicides).** All projects involving land disturbance and construction activities carry the potential for construction-related erosion. The anticipated impact for this project is small as NYS approved erosion and sedimentation control practices will be utilized. These include compliance with the NYS Standards for Erosion and Sediment Control and development and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) utilizing best management practices. Weekly inspections will be performed during construction to inspect erosion and sediment devices to confirm they are performing adequately and being maintained. Post-construction stormwater management devices will be implemented to treat run-off prior to discharging off-site. This project does not include the use of herbicides.

For these reasons, no significant adverse impact to land is anticipated.

**2. Impact on Geological Features – No impact.**

### 3. Impacts on Surface Water

The proposed action may affect one or more wetlands or other surface water bodies (e.g., streams, rivers, ponds or lakes).

There are no impacts under Section 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(f), 3(g), 3(j), 3(k) and 3(l).

The small impacts on surface water that are identified are due to:

**3(d) The proposed action may involve construction within or adjoining a freshwater or tidal wetland, or in the bed or banks of any other water body.** Two wetland crossings are proposed for the project that will consist of constructing bridges that span over the wetlands. Construction activities will require disturbance within the wetland banks and will require a NYSDEC wetland adjacency disturbance permit. All construction activities will be in strict compliance with the permit and standards. The project will not disturb the wetland so no impacts are anticipated.

**3(e) The proposed action may create turbidity in a water body, either from upland erosion, runoff, or by disturbing bottom sediments.** The anticipated impact for this project is small as NYS approved erosion and sedimentation control practices will be utilized during construction. In addition, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared to directly address how erosion and sediment will be controlled during construction. Weekly inspections will be performed during construction to inspect erosion and sediment devices to confirm they are performing adequately and being maintained. Post-construction stormwater management devices will be implemented to treat run-off prior to discharging off-site and will be designed in accordance with the NYS Storm Water Design Manual. The stormwater management devices will allow sediments to settle and/or filter out before stormwater enters existing drainage patterns, further reducing the potential impact of this project on the turbidity of receiving water bodies. The project will not cause disturbance to existing bottom sediments.

**3(h) The proposed action may cause soil erosion, or otherwise create a source of stormwater discharge that may lead to siltation or other degradation of receiving water bodies.** Some soil erosion may occur during construction which will be minimized through the use of NYS approved soil and erosion control practices. In addition, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared to directly address how erosion and sediment will be controlled during construction. Weekly inspections will be performed during construction to inspect erosion and sediment devices to confirm they are performing adequately and being maintained. Post-construction stormwater management devices will be implemented to treat run-off prior to discharging off-site and will be designed in accordance with the NYS Storm Water Design Manual. The stormwater management devices will allow sediments to settle and/or filter out before stormwater enters existing drainage patterns, further reducing the potential impact of this project on the soil erosion, siltation or degradation of receiving water bodies.

**3(i) The proposed action may affect the water quality of any water bodies within or downstream of the site of the proposed action.** The project may cause temporary water

quality impacts during construction but will be minimized using NYS approved soil and erosion control practices. In addition, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared to directly address how erosion and sediment will be controlled during construction. Weekly inspections will be performed during construction to inspect erosion and sediment devices to confirm they are performing adequately and being maintained. Post-construction stormwater management devices will be implemented to treat run-off prior to discharging off-site and will be designed in accordance with the NYS Storm Water Design Manual. The stormwater management devices will allow sediments to settle and/or filter out before stormwater enters existing drainage patterns, further reducing the potential impact of this project on the water quality of downstream water bodies.

For these reasons, no significant adverse impact to surface water is anticipated.

**4. Impact on Groundwater** – No impact.

**5. Impact on Flooding** – No impact.

**6. Impact on Air** – No impact.

**7. Impact on Plants and Animals.**

The proposed action may result in a loss of flora or fauna.

There are no impacts under Section 7(a), 7(b), 7(c), 7(d), 7(e), 7(f), 7(h), and 7(i).

The small impacts on plants and animals that are identified are due to:

**7(g) The proposed action may substantially interfere with nesting/breeding, foraging, or over-wintering habitat for the predominant species that occupy or use the project site.** The project will convert portion of forested and meadow lands into an athletic facility and will displace predominant species (such as deer, rabbits, squirrels, birds, etc.)

NOTE: There are no records of rare or state-listed animals or plants on or adjacent to the project site, other than a record of a known Northern Long-eared Bat hibernation site located approximately four miles away. The project proposes to perform tree cutting between November 1 and March 31 what bats are hibernating off-site to avoid potential incidental issues with the listed bat species.

There will be no adverse impact to any rare, endangered or threatened species.

**8. Impact on Agricultural Resources** – No impact.

**9. Impact on Aesthetic Resources**

The proposed action's use of the land is different from, or in sharp contrast to, current land use patterns between the proposed use as an interscholastic athletic facility and a scenic or aesthetic resource.

There are no impacts under Section 9(e).

The small impacts on aesthetic resources that are identified are due to:

9(a) **Proposed action may be visible from any officially designated federal, state, or local scenic or aesthetic resource.** While the Heritage Trail is not an officially designated aesthetic resource, the project will require removal of trees and vegetation that will open views into the site from the Heritage Trail at limited locations. The views into the site will be temporary as the land between the Trail and project will not be moved and allowed to grow naturally. The project is not in sharp contrast to the view of the Academy site to the south.

9(b) **The proposed action may result in the obstruction, elimination or significant screening of one or more officially designated scenic views.** The project will require removal of trees and vegetation that will open views into the site from the Heritage Trail at limited locations. The views into the site will be temporary as the land between the Trail and project will not be moved and allowed to grow naturally. The project is not in sharp contrast to the view of the Academy site to the south.

9(c) **The proposed action may be visible from publicly accessible vantage points (i) seasonally (e.g., screened by summer foliage, but visible during other seasons), (ii) year round.** The project will require removal of trees and vegetation that will open views into the site from the Heritage Trail at limited locations. The views into the site will be temporary as the land between the Trail and project will not be moved and allowed to grow naturally. The project is not in sharp contrast to the view of the Academy site to the south.

9(d) **The situation or activity in which viewers are engaged while viewing the proposed action is: (i) routine travel by residents, including travel to and from work, (ii) recreational or tourism based activities.** Recreational or tourism based activities. The project will require removal of trees and vegetation that will open views into the site from the Heritage Trail at limited locations. The views into the site will be temporary as the land between the Trail and project will not be moved and allowed to grow naturally. The project is not in sharp contrast to the view of the Academy site to the south.

9(f) **There are similar projects visible within the following distance of the proposed project: 0-1/2 mile; 1/2-3 miles; 3-5 miles; 5+ miles.** The project will require removal of trees and vegetation that will open views into the site from the Heritage Trail at limited locations. The views into the site will be temporary as the land between the Trail and project will not be moved and allowed to grow naturally. The project is not in sharp contrast to the view of the Academy site to the south.

For these reasons, no significant adverse impact to aesthetic resources is anticipated.

**10. Impact on Historical and Archaeological Resources – No impact.**

**11. Impact on Open Space and Recreation – No impact.**

**12. Impact on Critical Environmental Areas** – No impact.

**13. Impact on Transportation** – No impact.

**14. Impact on Energy** – No impact.

While the proposed action may cause an increase in the use of any form of energy, according to NYSDEC guidance the proposed project does not require new, upgraded, creation or extension of substations, energy transmission supply systems, nor does it use more than 2500 MWhrs or energy or is a building less than 100,000 square feet of building area and, therefore, not likely to have any impact on energy.

**15. Impact on Noise, Odor, and Light**

The proposed action will generate temporary amounts of increased noise as a result of construction activities similar in duration and intensity to other residential and/or commercial construction activities within the community.

There are no impacts under Section 15(b), 15(c), 15(d), and 15(e).

The small impacts on noise, odor, and light that are identified are due to:

**15(a) The proposed action may produce sound above noise levels established by local regulation.** Noise from construction equipment, construction vehicles, power tools etc. will exceed ambient levels during the construction phase of the proposed project, but will be temporary. Noise levels will likely be exceeded during athletic events.

**15(e) The proposed action may result in lighting creating sky-glow brighter than existing area conditions.** The proposed field lighting will be state of the art and will be designed so that light will not spill onto adjoining properties; however, it is possible that a resulting “sky glow” may be detectable from areas surrounding the project site. The light design will follow “Dark Sky” requirements resulting in less “sky glow”. Additionally, mature woods surround the site and help reduce lighting impacts. Pedestrian level poles will be located along the access walks and will be designed to provide safe light levels for pedestrians that traverse the walks.

For these reasons, no significant adverse impact noise, odor, or light is anticipated.

## **Conclusion**

In light of the above, the information in the Full Environmental Assessment Form and other information and documents, the conclusion is that there will be no significant adverse environmental impacts as a result of the District’s proposed project.

## **Contact Person for Further Information:**

Catherine O'Hara  
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Chester Union Free School District  
64 Hambletonian Avenue  
Chester, NY 10918  
(845) 469-5052

**A Copy of this Notice is filed with:**

Board of Education, Chester Union Free School District  
New York State Education Department  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
New York State Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau  
Town of Chester

**A Copy of this Notice is submitted electronically to:** Environmental Notice Bulletin at [enb@dec.ny.gov](mailto:enb@dec.ny.gov).