



## UPPER DARBY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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### Administrative Offices

**Daniel P. McGarry, Ed.D.**

Acting Superintendent

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Borough Manager of the Borough of Clifton Heights

FROM: Dr. Daniel P. McGarry

DATE: May 22, 2019

RE: Field and Facilities Use at Clifton Field, Borough of Clifton Heights

After careful study and consideration, and in light of the over-crowding at its existing middle schools, the Upper Darby School District has determined that it needs to erect a new middle school. Such a new middle school would add to the capacity of the existing middle schools and is not meant to replace either of them. The District owns the land comprising Clifton Field, part of which was conveyed by the Borough in the 1970's to the District. The District then leased the entire property back to the Borough with the express provision in the lease that the District could terminate the lease at any time if the District needed to build a school there.

The District is also aware that the Borough has a comprehensive plan, and has included this School District property in that plan as recreational space. Currently, there is a multi-purpose football/soccer field on the site as well as several baseball/softball areas and other recreational areas.

To address both the District's need for student capacity and the Borough's need for athletic and recreational space, the District has devised a plan that will provide for the required school needs while also maximizing the remaining area for athletic and recreational space. Moreover, the District has committed to giving priority to the Borough and its residents' organizations for the use of those athletic and recreational spaces on the property, including adding indoor recreational facilities that can be used by the community when not in use by the District.

The Board has repeatedly stated that it wishes to continue the Clifton Field's present community athletic and recreational uses such as those under the auspices of the Borough, the Clifton PAL, the Boys and Girls Club and other similar community organizations. Most recently, on May 6, 2019, the District passed a resolution that terminated the lease. That resolution also specifically stated the terms under which the District would manage the use of its recreational areas at the site, including both the fields and the gymnasium through its Recreation Department. Those terms provided as follows:

- a. The Board of School Directors instructed the District's Recreation Department to reach out to the Borough to determine the groups that the Borough, as leaseholder, had permitted to utilize the Clifton Field, and to determine the uses to which the groups put the field, and the schedule of such uses.

b. Based upon the data from the Borough, the District resolved to accommodate and prioritize requests from community and municipal groups that had been using the fields over other non-school groups.

c. Although the policies of the District relating to field and facilities uses will generally apply to the use of the fields and gymnasium at this site, for those community groups continuing previously permitted non-conforming uses, the District resolved to make exceptions to the applicable policies under certain conditions. Those conditions require the municipal or community groups enter agreements with the District to be responsible for all clean up, to be fully liable for any incidents arising from the uses, and to provide appropriate insurance.

The District also reached-out directly to various community groups currently utilizing the fields at this site and provided proposed memoranda of understanding that similarly promised them continued use not just of the upgraded fields, but also use of the gymnasium on a priority basis. The District has not yet received any word back from these organizations.

The present site contains multiple designated athletic fields and some other recreational areas. Through reconfiguration of the site and the selected location of the building and other site improvements, the District is able to retain more than 50% of the property solely for recreation field space, including 1 multipurpose field, 3 baseball/softball fields, 2 smaller sports fields and a community play area for younger children. Besides those areas, the District also will be building a gymnasium that can accommodate community uses; capacity that is currently lacking anywhere in the Borough.

The District believes that this plan will conform to the letter and intent of the Borough's comprehensive plan related to athletic, recreational and open space.

DPM: th