

Sent: 1/25/2023 at 3:53PM

From: Laura Cavender, Fifth Ward Commissioner lcavender@havtwp.org

Subject: Announcement and Open Forum on Polo Field



Dear neighbors and 5th ward residents,

I am writing with some updates on Lower Merion Township's request to permit the baseball and softball fields at Polo Field after school for Black Rock Middle School's teams, starting in Spring 2024. I am also sending a paper copy of this letter to all of the neighborhoods surrounding Polo Field.

We met to discuss this issue last February in a virtual forum with myself as well as Lower Merion Commissioners Scott Zelov and Andy Gavrin. As a newly elected official, hearing your concerns and wishes for the park at that time helped me better understand and advocate for you as we have developed a tentative agreement. In order to be open and transparent, I would like to share this tentative agreement with neighbors.

Polo Field, which sits between Penn Street, Railroad Avenue, Dayton Road, and County Line Road, is an 18-acre park with 80 years of shared history in the township. Haverford and Lower Merion have shared equal use of Polo Field since 1942 under a longstanding, but ad hoc, agreement.

The tentative agreement would allow Black Rock to use the baseball and softball fields for this request only, and would not increase the intensity of field use or the number of field users. Additionally, there would be no bus parking allowed in Haverford Township.

The tentative agreement also would require:

1. Transfer of the ownership deed to Polo Field (18 acres) permanently to Haverford Township;
2. An upfront, \$275,000 capital investment from Lower Merion School District to be used for improving the park for residents and users;
3. Formally articulating the 50/50 split of use that the two townships have always shared, and clearly specifying maintenance responsibilities and maintenance standards in a renewable agreement between the two townships.

A capital investment of \$275,000 would enable us to make improvements to the park that would directly benefit resident park users. These could include a small playground addition, a small seating and shelter area, bordering greenery on the Penn Street side of the fields, additional trees on the Dayton Road side of the park, and the addition of a rain garden for stormwater drainage in low-lying areas near Railroad Avenue. Residents could give input on what these improvements would look like in the same way that they would for improvements to any other township park.

It's very rare to get an opportunity that is truly a win for everyone involved. In addition to a large investment and the transfer of an 18-acre park to Haverford, we are continuing the wishes of the original land donor, H. Gates Lloyd, a Coopertown resident who stipulated in the 1944 deed to the land, that the park be "... used as a playground, playfield, or park at all times hereafter and forever."

To discuss this tentative agreement and provide an open and transparent conversation, I will be hosting an open forum with Lower Merion Commissioners Scott Zelov and Andy Gavrin and staff members from each township on Thursday, February 2, at 6:00 pm at the CREC (9000 Parkview Drive). I look forward to answering your questions at that time.

Parks and open space are among our most valuable township assets - and that value only grows with time. Working together creatively, we can enable children from Black Rock to use Polo Field, while honoring both townships' unique relationship to Polo Field and improving the park for everyone in the community.

**Laura Cavender
5th Ward Commissioner
Haverford Township**