

Brynford Civic Association

February 22, 2022

Mr. David Burman
Haverford Township
1014 Darby Road
Havertown, PA 19083

Dear Mr. Burman,

Many Brynford residents attended the February 3rd Zoom meeting at which Lower Merion Township (LMT) presented their preliminary proposal to use the Polo Field as one of the principal facilities for the new LMSD middle school's after-school athletic programs. To supplement the letters submitted directly to the Haverford Township (HT) by the community, the Brynford Civic Association is taking this opportunity to respond.

The Polo Field lies at the heart of Brynford. It is one of the neighborhood's most cherished resources, providing a space for recreation, relaxation, and rejuvenation. Approximately sixty homes directly about the Polo Field, out of a Brynford community of over 500 homes. It is the principal public green space in a crowded, suburban community. Brynford neighbors believe any plans for the Polo Field must consider its long-term health, viability, and sustainability so that future generations will continue to enjoy this unique resource.

As was apparent from the comments at the February 3rd meeting, the Brynford community does not agree that the proposal to use the Polo Field for LMSD's after-school athletic programs on an ongoing and indefinite basis is business as usual.

The proposal as outlined at the Zoom meeting represents a fundamental change in the use that not only threatens the long-term viability of the Polo Field as a community resource and could affect its availability to the community in perpetuity, but exacerbates ongoing and already acute problems. Concerns include the following:

The intensity of Use – How will the intensity of use change if LMT's proposal is implemented? A study comparing historical, current, and proposed intensity of use must be conducted and shared. Without a solid understanding of the number of people (both athletes and spectators) and the number of hours they will be spending at the Polo Field, a proposal is incomplete since these data drive traffic, parking, and maintenance requirements.

Until full usage data – historical, current, and proposed – has been assembled and shared with all stakeholders, the LMT/LMSD proposal will be viewed as incomplete.

Traffic/Parking – How will the proposed use affect a neighborhood already severely challenged by traffic and parking? The current/historical transportation arrangements must be compared to those for the proposed use. This review should include information on arrangements for LMSD drop-off and pick-up, the types of vehicles to be used, as well as specific plans for the traffic/parking arrangements for games and tournaments. The area is congested as is, with five crowded roads with residents and other parking surrounding the field.

Until a full traffic study of Brynford addressing the traffic flows, parking, and safe walkability/bike-ability under both current and proposed usage of the Polo Field, the LMT/LMSD proposal will be viewed as incomplete.

Maintenance – What new arrangements are required to ensure that the Polo Field will be properly maintained under the proposed new use? The Polo Field has been maintained with an extremely light touch in the past. Three aspects are of particular concern:

Sports field turf maintenance – a proper maintenance plan which fosters the long-term health and sustainability of the fields must be commissioned.

1. Sports Field Turf Maintenance – a proper maintenance plan which fosters the long-term health and sustainability of the fields must be commissioned.
2. Regular Trash/Waste Removal – regular removal of trash and other debris from athletic activities is necessary, without trucks driving over the fields as they do now. The field is a heavily used dog field but lacks appropriate signage and waste stations.
3. Chemical Toilets – the appropriate number of toilets must be installed. Port-a-potties should be placed on cement pads on the field side of the parking lot so that users do not have to run through the lot when cars are entering and exiting.

Any LMT/LMSD proposal will be viewed as incomplete unless these issues are addressed in detail. A maintenance plan developed by a reputable, third-party professional is needed. Adherence to the maintenance plan by the responsible party must be obligatory. Accountability and enforcement must be spelled out.

Infrastructure – What infrastructure upgrades are necessary to avoid further damage to the Polo Field under the LMT/LMSD proposal?

Stormwater management – the intensive use of the Polo Field, the minimal maintenance, and increased intensity of weather events associated with climate change have all combined to make stormwater runoff from the field into adjacent properties on Penn, Railroad, Polo, and Rugby problematic. Regular turf maintenance will help mitigate the run-off, while also creating a deep root system for a healthier field. In addition, standing water on Railroad is a hazard for pedestrians and motorists alike. No drop-off along Railroad or increased use of that end of the field could be considered without first addressing this situation.

Access road and parking lot – the sole access road to the Polo Field is a narrow, private road, with access as part of the lease for the field and granted by deed for one resident's driveway. The road cannot be widened without taking private property. Steps need to be taken to enforce the no parking restriction along the road, especially if there is increased traffic during LMSD games and tournaments. Curbs, parking stops, or bollards around the perimeter of the parking lot would preclude parking on the grass.

Any proposal for the change in use must address these required infrastructure improvements.

Transparency – The community needs full transparency from about the following issues, given the long-term effects of any proposal on the Polo Field.

1. Scheduling - who is permitted to use the facility and when, with the schedule available to the public. Fees charged must also be totally transparent.
2. Maintenance and Improvements – a publicly available plan, with a schedule of specific maintenance activities is needed. This is especially important for users of the field to avoid mowing crews, for example, and other potentially dangerous activities. Capital improvements should be discussed with neighborhood groups and users before final approval in the budgeting processes for each township.

A formal proposal must include specific, verifiable, and enforceable commitments to transparency.

Duration – As mentioned above, it was implied at the meeting that the proposal calls for a change in use for an ongoing and indefinite period. A formal proposal must include:

1. A limited term of use, e.g. one year.
2. A clearly spelled-out process involving all stakeholders for the annual review of the use.
3. Penalties/sanctions for the extension of the use without review and notification.

Lastly, any formal proposal will include an updated site plan of the Polo Field and the immediate environs including any points of access, communications, etc. This will allow any discussion of usage to be precise and unambiguous.

In conclusion, the Brynford community is deeply concerned that important issues have not been addressed concerning the LMT/LMSD proposal. The community would like to see a formal proposal that includes the information spelled out above, namely:

- Polo Field usage study
- Brynford traffic study
- Polo Field maintenance plan
- Plan for infrastructure improvements to Polo Field
- Commitment to operational transparency
- Limited term with a clear process for review of terms of use
- Updated site plan of the Polo Field

Sincerely,

Dr. Gail Farally-Semerad

President

Brynford Civic Association