

### Rebuttal to Newspaper and Public meeting Comments

As an elected official I thoroughly read all documents submitted for our approval. If there is any question to their intent or legality I make it a practice to consult the writer or our township Solicitor for clarification of my understanding. The documents proposed for the passage of the establishment of the Fairfield Area Recreation Commission were submitted to each municipal and School District governing body for their full review and are also Public Record and accessible by each elected member at each of their public offices. The comments issued to the newspaper column titled "Letter to the Editor" by several elected officials contained very misleading and unsubstantiated statements in opposition to the proposed recreation program. I offer this rebuttal to the key points addressed as reasons to oppose an affirmative vote on this proposal.

1. **Budget Concerns:** The budget numbers presented were presented to each municipality with the committee's very public statements that this is a budget showing what we believe is the maximum contribution with minimum commitment on the part of a volunteer Commission. It has been stated many times that the Study Group fully intends to work as quickly as possible towards a self sustaining Commission and to enlist the support of "Community Organizations and Businesses" as sustaining partners.
2. **Locked In Commitment (no way out):** The STATE DCNR grant for the Study has been satisfied. The STATE DCNR grant for the employment of a Director will decrease over five years. The STATE is committing to our Community the financial support to assist in this program. Therefore, the committee felt that as community partners, we should also commit ourselves to the STATE with that same timeframe for success. Withdrawal is made available in the documents with notice to the other partners. No one is being LOCKED IN nor can they be locked in since each Board/Council changes over time and so do their circumstances. The request of commitment is a matter of honoring one's position, support and vote.
3. **No Elected Members:** It is inaccurately portrayed that the "to be" established Recreation Commission would not be elected and therefore would have no accountability. The By-laws and Agreements submitted to each governing body clearly define the question of accountability to each municipality and School Board member organizations. Those same documents also agree that there shall be two representatives from each municipality and school district OF WHICH ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM EACH ENTITY MUST BE AN ELECTED OFFICIAL, giving full accountability with checks and balances as well as audits to each partner in the Fairfield Area School District.
4. **No Statistical Data Was Provided:** The Study Committee has met monthly for more than twenty (20) months under the direction of each municipality in the FASD with two (2) delegates from each and required to report our progress back to their governing bodies. The Study Committee also is represented by two delegates from each partner with one from each being an elected official. Each municipality entered into this Study because it was statistically supported by the Adams County Greenways Plan, The Adams County Comprehensive Plan, The Carroll Valley Comprehensive Plan, the Hamiltonban and Fairfield Borough Joint Recreation Plan, and the Southwest Joint Comprehensive Plan (currently under revision). The Southwest Plan that is nearing completion was under Public input review a year prior to the start of the Fairfield Area Recreation Study Group's first meeting and in fact was that input session was a major forming factor of the Study Group . Public input meetings have been held for each of these plans prior to their adoption.
5. **Commission will Build and Own Facilities:** The Commission will not own fields, classrooms, pavilions or any other real property. The commission, in a joint venture with multiple municipalities, can assist as a partner in securing grant funding for improvements to partner owned facilities but the maintenance and ownership of all facilities is retained by the partner entity. Again, this is clearly addressed in the supporting documents.
6. **Programs and Additional Facilities Not Needed:** Not True. Discussions and input have been sought from youth organizations that currently utilize these facilities. Their input determined that fields are being over-utilized

because there is a field shortage and scheduling problems at the height of each athletic season for the multiple sports. Additional youth activities are in minimal supply or simply not available in this area. Aside from a few formed adult activities that generally are moving from home to home, there are no young or older adult programs that are established to address a wide range of interests.

The costs and time involved in just the facility scheduling alone to the municipalities who currently own them would be a savings to the municipalities with a Recreation Director assuming that responsibility.

7. **Program Times After 9:00 PM:** Untrue. At no time has the Study Committee put forth a schedule of programs. The committee published a list of programs that have been successful in other communities that have recreational programming as a sample of possible future programs. A responsible Director and Commission would not engage in programs after 9:00 PM, for two simple and basic reasons, first it would not be successful programming and second, that is the common ENDing time for evening activities NOT the beginning time.
8. **Blocking Non-Parents from the school for security reasons:** Since the dawning of time school activities have been attended by many different community residents and not all have children in the School District. School Plays, Basketball, Football, Wrestling, and Concerts are a celebration of what our local children have accomplished. Districts have worked hard to gain the interest of their communities and citizens. The proposal that we do not allow anyone who is not a property tax payer supporting the “School District or Municipality Partner” and who is a Non – Parent of the School District into the District buildings and activities would have to be applied to all residents which means that several current School Board elected members would not be allowed into any of the School District Buildings. Was this comment fully thought through to its impact?
9. **Will Create a Recreation Tax:** The claim that the establishment of an Area Recreation Commission will create a Recreation Tax is false. As previously stated the Commission will function on what is provided from elected boards, community organizations and business leaders. A recreation commission is not a taxing authority and therefore cannot enact any tax for their programs.
10. **Who Should Have More Seats on the Commission Based on Population:** The Study Group thoroughly discussed the voting numbers from each municipality and how to achieve an even balance of votes. This topic was a priority to the commission to insure that ALL the parties would be equal players in the programming of the commission. We have seen so many other multi-municipal ventures fail because of weighted votes that become so controlling by one or two factions. We felt that this should be a true cooperative effort for each and every municipality no matter how small or how large. Let’s set aside our need to have the most important and ultimate power play on the block and just work together as a community.....as one voice.
11. **Increased Cost to the School District:** The School district is required by law to employ an Athletic Director. As with many other teaching positions there are times of the year when this person may be under utilized since school is not in session year round. The Study Group recommended that we contract with the School for the services in the position of Recreation Director which would result in the School District benefitting financially with a minimum contract commitment from the Commission for \$25,000 worth of services. This arrangement thereby decreases the School District’s cost of employment.