

## Initial Edison Fields Project Proposal: June 15, 2021

### Background

At the June 15, 2021 Town Council meeting, the Council voted to authorize Mayor Brindle to sign a Letter of Intent ("LOI") to explore a shared service agreement with the Westfield Board of Education for a proposed multipurpose fields project at Edison Intermediate School.



The proposed Edison School Multipurpose Fields Project consists of three turf, lighted multi-use fields behind the Edison Intermediate School property, which would be configured to provide the following:

### Soccer

- Two regulation 180' x 360' fields
- One regulation 240' x 360' field
- Two regulation 135' x 195' youth fields

### Lacrosse

- Three regulation 180' x 360' fields

### Baseball

- One regulation 320' field, bleachers, dugouts, bullpens, batting cages and backstops
- One regulation 300' field, bleachers, dugouts, bullpens, batting cages and backstops

### Field hockey

- Two regulation 180' x 300' fields with goals on wheels

### Football/Band/Drill Team

- Two regulation 160' x 360' fields
- One new band tower

## **Benefits**

Providing new fields was one of the top recommendations that came out of the Town's Strategic Parks Plan -- a publicly-driven initiative which provided Westfield with a holistic, long-term road map for optimizing its parks, recreation opportunities, and open spaces and was adopted by the Town Council in January 2020.

While multiple projects were identified as opportunities in the Parks Plan, the Recreation Commission Parks & Fields Committee proposed the Edison School Multipurpose Fields Project as the top priority. It offers the greatest and most immediate additional capacity for the community and can be dedicated exclusively for Westfield teams and residents since it is not a Green Acres facility, unlike nearly all of the Town-owned municipal parks. By completing the Edison project first, the community gains immediate, expanded capacity that would benefit the largest number of potential user groups, while also offering the least disruption to existing fields during construction.

The Edison School property is owned by the Board of Education, and the Letter of Intent has provided the initial framework for the shared service agreement, which states the Town shall pay \$1 per year for 30 years to lease the property, and will bear responsibility for the financing, design, construction, and maintenance of the facility in cooperation with the Board of Education.

Currently, the Edison School fields are used almost exclusively by Edison School and Westfield High School for a variety of activities, including band, drill team, and practices for some Westfield High School sports teams. Only Westfield High School baseball games and select track and field event competitions can be held on the existing fields. The proposed project will accommodate and enhance the existing school utilization while adding significant new fields capacity (almost 400,000 square feet of turf, lit fields) for use by a wide range of user groups in Town, including girls and boys soccer, boys and girls lacrosse, field hockey, baseball, football, ultimate frisbee, and various other sports practices and potential civic uses.

### **Steering Committee**

The Edison School Multipurpose Fields Project Steering Committee was formed in February 2020 to work with a consultant, Spiegle Architectural Group, which was hired through a public bidding process, to assist with the design of a potential project. The committee is comprised of the following individuals:

- Peggy Oster - President of the Board of Education (through December 31, 2020)
- Amy Root - President of the Board of Education (January 2021 - present)
- Councilman Scott Katz - Town Council liaison to the Recreation Commission
- Gary Fox - Recreation Commission Chair (through Dec. 31, 2020)
- Jennifer Gilman - Recreation Commission Chair (January 1, 2021 - present)
- Mike Bielen - Board of Education member and Chair of the Board Facilities Committee

- Brad Rothenberg - Recreation Commission member and Chair of the Park & Fields Committee (through December 31, 2020)
- Russ Howell - Recreation Commission member and Chair of the Park & Fields Committee (January 2021 - present)
- Dana Sullivan - School Business Administrator
- Jim Gildea - Westfield Town Administrator
- Don Bogardus - Westfield Recreation Director
- Advisors - School district major users:
  1. Sandy Mamary - School Athletic Director
  2. Matt Bolton - Edison School Principal
  3. Chris Vitale - Westfield High School Band Director

### **Anticipated Cost**

The total estimated cost of the proposed concept, if all three phases were to be done at the same time, is \$18.2MM. Once the project cost is finalized after donations and sponsorships are considered, if it is determined that spreading out the cost over time is more prudent, the Town could also consider a phased approach in which the estimated cost is \$9.2MM for Phase #1, \$5.9MM for Phase #2, and \$3.1MM for Phase #3, which could be completed over a few years.

Due to the Town's legal and financial flexibility with capital projects and bonding capacity, the financing of the entire project will be administered by the Town. It is anticipated that revenues from the recently adopted PILOT agreement from the Westfield Crossing redevelopment project will be used to service the annual debt. Additionally, a capital campaign seeking grants, sponsorships, and sports league contributions will commence once the final concept is approved after a public input process.

## **Next Steps**

The Recreation Commission and Board of Education will be conducting public input sessions on July 21 and September 20 at 7:00PM at Edison School. Comments can also be emailed to [edisonfields@westfieldnj.gov](mailto:edisonfields@westfieldnj.gov).