

Pittsford’s athletic fields improvement project

For many years, Pittsford families in all parts of the Town and from all walks of life have expressed the need for more and better playing fields for both youth and adult sports. I heard this during my first, brief, tour of duty in Town government nearly twenty years ago. Since returning to Town government as Supervisor this year, I'm hearing it again. The need remains.

Given the extent of families' participation in sports in Pittsford, the Town still offers too few places for games and practice. Conditions such as poor drainage and other problems limit the utility of the fields we have. The results range from limited availability, to unreasonable practice times -- very late in the evening or very early in the morning – to no access whatsoever.

Starting a couple of years ago, under former Supervisor Bill Carpenter, the Town government began a process to prepare a plan for improving Pittsford’s playing fields. We’ve partnered with the Pittsford Central School District, which also needed to upgrade its fields, to plan jointly in a way that permits us to share fields and resources where practical, thereby achieving the goals of both Town and School District in the most economical manner. This collaboration has been a resounding success, yielding complementary improvement plans.

The School District put forward its part of the plan last year. Overwhelmingly approved by voters, it’s being carried out, and you can see work going on at Sutherland High School. Work at Mendon High School is scheduled to begin during the next school year.

The Town is now ready with its part of the plan. It’s the result of two years of work, led by Councilman Jared Lusk and involving extensive participation by youth and adult sports groups across Pittsford. We’ll be scheduling public information meetings in the month of June to present the Fields Improvement Plan and to garner wider public input.

An improvement of this magnitude will involve significant expense. We’re finalizing the fine points of proposed financing for the project. We’ll be discussing the details with you in the weeks ahead, including at the June public information meetings.

What’s clear is that a decision on committing funds for a plan of this scope should be a decision by the whole community. For that reason, the Town Board will put the plan to a public referendum, to be held about the middle of September.

In very brief outline, the plan would improve existing fields and add a new site, as follows:

1. Thornell Farm Park

The plan calls for a new synthetic turf field with lighting for evening events and two new grass fields. One existing grass field would remain. Two existing softball fields

would be removed, to permit re-grading for the new fields. Two other existing softball fields would remain. Thus, altogether, the reconfigured site would have four rectangular fields, one of them synthetic turf, and two diamonds. Improvements would include bathroom renovations and a new playground and lighting and surface improvements for the tennis courts.

2. Hopkins Park

Existing fields would be re-graded. Improvements would include installation of a bathroom and a playground.

3. Great Embankment Park

Whether improved or not, fields at Great Embankment need regrading due to substantial land settlement. The plan would replace two existing softball fields with three new rectangular fields. The improved facility would include more parking, a bathroom and a new playground.

4. Willard Road

This site has been leased for agriculture since the Town acquired it. Under the proposed plan, the site would comprise three new softball fields with parking and a bathroom. Access would be through the Middle School entry drive off of Calkins Road, and the new fields would back up to the school property.

Irrigation and drainage improvements would be installed at all sites. All new bathrooms would be connected to public utilities for water, sewer and electric. Proper drainage, storm water management and erosion control measures would be installed and used at each venue in accordance with regulations of the State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Pittsford typically has placed itself ahead of the curve on many components contributing to the quality of life of its residents. To date, sport facilities have not been among them. After decades of deferred action, we have a plan to move forward, efficiently, and in conjunction with the School District. The Town Board and I look forward to discussing this proposal with you in the months ahead, as we move on toward a referendum in September.