

October 18, 2011

An open letter to West Shore School District School Board Members:

It is our understanding you will vote on the appropriation for West Shore Recreation Commission's 2012 Budget on Thursday, October 20th. We wish to ensure that the Board has a full understanding of the history of this long-standing partnership and its numerous mutual benefits. We would also like to emphasize our willingness to collaborate with the Board to identify alternatives for continuing the School District's participation in the West Shore Recreation Commission.

Public entities must cooperate to provide public services. Incredible fiscal challenges only make this cooperation more critical. We completely understand the fiscal challenges faced in the current economic environment and are committed to being a good steward of public funds. West Shore Rec has made adjustments to its structure as a result of the economic downturn. In 2008, professional staff was reduced by 25%.

When it was established in 1968, the Commission was designed to be funded entirely by tax support from the partners. Over the years, as services and the number of participants have been increased, the tax support has decreased to less than 30% of the budget, indicating growing public support and operational efficiency. Furthermore, the School District's share of support has *declined* while the township and borough's percentage has *increased*.

We have reviewed the Mission and Vision for the School District. Simply stated, we greatly assist in fulfilling part of your vision. Part of the Vision for the School District very aptly describes being "welcoming to the community" that supports and funds it. Bringing Commission programs into schools shows citizens what they are paying for and the high level of quality each School District facility offers. The Professional Practice section states "quality education requires the TOTAL involvement of students, parents, educators, and the community..." The Commission IS a big part of the community and brings much of the community to the School District.

By definition and purpose, the Commission:

- Saves all the municipal partners money by reducing duplication of services.
- The Commission was designed as a joint venture of local government to provide public services to all citizens. It was not mandated to be totally self-supporting.
- The shared partnership concept in providing recreational services has proven cost effective throughout the Commonwealth over many years.
- Compared with other commissions in Pennsylvania, West Shore Rec's ratio of tax support to the population served is already one of the lowest.

Please be aware that the School District does not need to withdraw from the intergovernmental agreement of cooperation to make a change in its contribution amount. The agreement requires the Commission to provide its revenue requirements for the ensuing year by September 15th. The partners are to respond by October 31st. **We ask that discussion take place to reach the best solution to continue services.** The long-standing partnership has resulted in community-wide benefits valued by School District residents for 43 years and deserves to persevere.

Respectfully,

West Shore Recreation Commission

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The West Shore School District has supported an organization and a concept that has been highlighted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a model for intergovernmental cooperation.



Cooperation in Action

Coordinating Community Use of School Facilities - In 1968, Lewisberry, Lemoyne and New Cumberland Boroughs; Fairview, Lower Allen and Newberry Townships and the West Shore School District established the West Shore Recreation Commission (Cumberland and York Counties) to coordinate public use of school facilities and municipal parks. When the West Shore Natatorium was built, the school district wanted all taxpayers to enjoy the facility. West Shore Rec was given the responsibility to discern and meet the needs of all residents who wish to use the swimming pool. Through West Shore Rec all ages use the pool for swimming and diving lessons, water safety training, birthday parties, competition, exercise and general recreation for families. The school district provides the majority of the facilities used for the hundreds of other West Shore Rec community recreation programs. It's a better arrangement to have one organization request school facilities than to have eight different townships and boroughs request school facilities.



Regional recreation agencies may coordinate community use of school district football stadiums and outdoor track facilities.

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