

Plainville Citizen Op Ed, June, 2015

We celebrated another very successful school year on June 18, concluding with the PHS graduation. We were pleased to be able to hold the graduation ceremony outside, on a beautiful evening, on our stadium field. This happened as a result of a delay in the proposed project to install synthetic turf fields at PHS, which we originally anticipated would be underway by mid-June. However, the initial construction project bidding process failed to produce an acceptable bid that was within the proposed budget for the project. I would like to review a few of the facts and decisions made with regard to the turf project and the current status.

The Community Turf Field Committee, which includes over 20 members from town, school system staff and different community organizations, met on June 4 to review the project status. Since the previous committee meeting, staff worked with the project's design consultants and the company that submitted the lowest bid during the first competitive bidding process, in an attempt to cut the cost of the project within the overall budget of available funding. During that period of negotiations, it became apparent that the Committee would not be able to reach an agreement with the company and decided not to bring a contract forward to the Town Council in late May. After considerable discussion between the project designers, Kaestle Boos Associates, Town Manager Robert Lee, myself, and leadership from both the Board of Education and Turf Committee, it was decided that the best option would be to rebid the project in late June, with minor modifications and a revised timeline.

Project modifications for the second bid include a latex track surface, modifying the sideline text, storing existing top soil that is removed on site, and several additional minor adjustments that could potentially produce cost savings, without detracting from the overall quality of the project.

Under the new timeline, construction document revision would occur during the month of June, and the rebidding of the project between June 29-July 27. If this second round produces a favorable bid, within our budget, construction could begin as early as August 15. It would include main field earthwork, track resurfacing, practice field earthwork, main field turf installation, and practice field turf installation. Under the new project timeline, substantial completion of the fields is scheduled for November 1, 2015.

If the second bid process is successful, the revised timeline will have an impact on some of our boys and girls soccer and football teams' home game schedule only. The sports will be fully functional throughout the fall season, but it could require alternate locations being secured for some home games. The Athletic Coordinator and coaches are aware and prepared to handle this situation. We are doing all we can to maintain the quality of the field we originally planned for and ultimately hope to install. The adjusted plan provides the best possible opportunity for getting the state-of-art facility our students deserve, and for getting it done within the budget. If the alternate timeline is implemented, we will do everything possible to minimize the disruption to our PHS teams and any other community groups that typically use the fields at PHS.