

February 17, 2018

Hamburg Township Board of Trustees
P O Box 157
Hamburg, MI 48139



Re: Agreement for Occupancy of Property / Manly Bennett West Soccer Fields
Amended Park Use Policy

Dear Members of the Board:

When the Hamburg Township Board Meeting agenda and information was posted for the meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 19th, we became aware of a proposed agreement with the Pinckney School District for "Occupancy" of the Bennett Park West Soccer Fields as well as the amended Park Use Policy. The Hamburg Enhanced Recreation Organization (H.E.R.O.) is writing to express concerns with the proposed actions.

In 2013, the Township adopted the amended Park Facility Use Policy. That policy provided the rules and regulations for use of the park and Township regulated recreation facilities. It also established category ratings for priority use. The H.E.R.O. non-profit, 501(c)(3) all volunteer, community group was given Park Use Category #3 designation (Qualified Group Use – Not for Profit) by the Hamburg Township Board and granted "priority consideration for their events and listed on the approved list of groups on file with the Township".

The proposed Park Facility with an effective date of March 5, 2019 has reclassified and redefined the categories. There is no longer a 'Qualified Group Use'. There now is a 'Non-Profit Group Use (Category #2) "for any park facility or trail not otherwise reserved by permit or agreement, non-profits may apply for use..." Which basically says if the H.E.R.O. event falls within the timeframe that the park is exclusively the PCS per the agreement, we won't even be considered.

In years past, due to safety issues, park blackout dates were established and enforced. In the amended policy, if a blackout date is assigned "other uses may be limited in those areas." This could potentially create not just safety issues but logistical concerns in running an event of the magnitude of the Fun Fest.

As a qualified volunteer group non-profit that has planned, organized, funded, and hosted the annual community festival at Manly Bennett Park for 14 years, the new standards could negatively impact our park use for future events, possibly even making it impossible to host it at the park. Should this amended policy be adopted, H.E.R.O. respectfully requests 'Grandfathered' status.

Many other changes were made to the amended policy in what appears to be an effort to adjust it to accommodate the proposed contract with the Pinckney Community Schools to have

exclusive use of Bennett Park Soccer Fields. Words such as “agreement” and “lease” have been added to allow for their exclusive use.

With regard to the proposed contract between Hamburg Township and Pinckney Community Schools, H.E.R.O. has the following concerns:

1. The Hamburg Family Fun Fest utilizes the West Bennett Soccer fields for our laser and fireworks shows each year. If PCS is granted “first priority use” of this section of the park, it could possibly prevent H.E.R.O.’s use.
2. Section 2 of the contract reads “For any additional events, the dates and times will be determined between the parties at least 60 days prior to event.....the Township’s use shall be by agreement.” If the Township is required to have an agreement with PCS for use of their own park property, it could potentially impact our use.
3. Section 5 of the contract reads “The School District also reserves the right to restrict/block access to the Property when not in use by the School District....” If the Township gives the school district the right to block access to the PUBLIC park land at any time, let alone when it is not being used by them, this has the potential to prohibit our use.

In addition to the annual Fun Fest, H.E.R.O. also hosts the Vietnam Memorial Moving Wall at West Bennett Park soccer field area. The Wall is scheduled to return this year August 29 – September 2nd and park use approval has already been granted. As a result of the Township approval, many contracts have been signed and deposits issued. We are committed to the dates and the location.

H.E.R.O. would very much like to continue to host the Hamburg Family Fun Fest at Bennett Park for many years to come, and we hope that the Township Board will take into consideration the potential negative impacts that the proposed contract with PCS and changes to the park use policy could have on our ability to do so.

Respectfully,

H.E.R.O. Board of Directors

Joanna Hardesty
President
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