



Laurel Soccer Club, Inc.

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July 15, 2006

Laurel School District
Dr. Sandra Hennon
2497 Harlansburg Rd.
New Castle, PA 16101

7/15/06
1 of 2

Dear Dr. Hennon,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me on Friday. As you have not yet had a meeting regarding our latest request, I thought it might be best if I detailed out some of my concerns regarding statements in the recent news articles.

There were comments made by Mike Krol & Tim Redfoot that I think need addressed, either that they were misquoted by the newspaper or their objections do not appear to be substantial reasons for denying the addition of a soccer program in Laurel.

The first of Mike Krol's comments was; "Four of Lawrence County's eight school districts have soccer programs. Shenango, Union, New Castle and Laurel do not."

Shenango after many years of having players join either the Laurel or Neshannock soccer programs, last year launched their own club program. It is the club's goal to have soccer in their school in 5 years, once their club program is well under way. Union is a much smaller school with about 1/3 less students, yet has only one less sport each than Laurel for boys and girls, wrestling and softball. New Castle while being a large school is very inner city and does not currently have a club program to even allow children to take up the interest. In an informal study using current WPIAL sports by schools reports. Schools having soccer programs in Beaver & Butler counties comprise on the average of 80% of the total number of schools in the counties. It appears that not only is Laurel behind the times, but so is Lawrence County in general with only half of the counties schools offering soccer.

"With 671 students in the middle and high schools, Laurel cannot support another sport"

Is the figure correct? According to the figures that Laurel provided to the WPIAL there are only 325 students in high school. What grades is Mr. Krol considering middle school? If they are only 7th & 8th grade, then Laurel is in for a tremendous increase in high school population. The two grades have a total of 346 students versus the 325 in four grades presently.

Re: 7 girls playing co-op, "Girls couldn't join the team because of transportation, liability and budget issues that need to be worked out with Ellwood City"

Does this mean Mr. Krol has addressed these issues with the Ellwood City & Laurel School District boards and has list of the requirements? If so, I am sure that as I have stated all along, the parents of these 7 girls would be more than willing to provide all transportation necessary, and consider underwriting any costs that the Ellwood City School board may deem necessary to include our players. As for liability, we have consulted an insurance agent who informs us that the school should already have a liability policy in place to cover all present activities. The inclusion of soccer in any form would simply require amending the policy and probably would not involve any additional cost in premium.

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7/15/06 2 of 2

"With 200 students participating in sports at Laurel, Krol said there isn't enough interest for soccer"

The club is asking for a varsity soccer program, as far as I know that entails only high school age students. Per Laurel's Athletic Budget for 2006 / 2007, only 125 high school students participate in a fall sport including 14 cheerleaders. There are only a few schools that have a junior high soccer program at this time. The parents of the present group of soccer players are not expecting a junior high team or a junior varsity team. Our interest is for the core group of players who start with the program and stick with it. The minimum size for a team would be 18 players; schools typically roster 24 - 30 players. Regarding his "isn't enough interest in soccer". I know that existing athletic coaches have been asked this question, but has anyone asked the students. The charts I provided you from the informal surveys taken by the 7th grade, show just the opposite, there is adequate interest.

"The administration and school board realize that when you accept a program like soccer, you are looking at more than one program, including varsity, junior varsity and junior high teams".

Laurel presently has no junior high programs for Spring Softball or Baseball. Why would it be any different for soccer?

Tim Redfoot expressed "We have some struggling programs already, whatever sport we allow we want it to thrive. It would be irresponsible for us to jump into something like this."

If there is a sport that is struggling, perhaps it is because of lack of student interest or the cost of the program. We believe that soccer is a sport the students are interested in and if the matter is cost, soccer is one of the least expensive sports going. The club has repeatedly expressed that it is willing to underwrite the cost of a varsity program for a minimum of the first two years. We are not asking the school to "jump" into anything. The school can consider allowing the co-op program at no cost or giving the club its' "blessing" and allowing a club team as recognized by WPIAL again at no cost.

Dr. Hennon, I appreciate your holding meetings regarding the inclusion of soccer in Laurel. I would like to be personally involved if it were possible so that I may hear and rebut the objections firsthand. However, I trust that you are handling these meetings and discussions honestly and decisions are being based on facts not preconceived opinions. If the school board and administrators would be willing to grant the co-op play or club team as previously requested, perhaps a goal can be set for the inclusion of a varsity soccer program at a future date. The goal should be one with achievable and reasonable objectives that the club can use to demonstrate the viability of the sport. It would entail no investment on the school and not be held as false hope to the students. The students would see a promise by the school, that if the program achieved its' goals, then there would be a soccer program and if there was insufficient sustained interest or the program could not support itself then the school would be justified in denying its' inclusion. I believe wholeheartedly that there is interest in the sport to start a varsity program today, but do understand the board and administrators, being less optimistic and cautious.

Sincerely,

Vincent Bejgrowicz
President
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