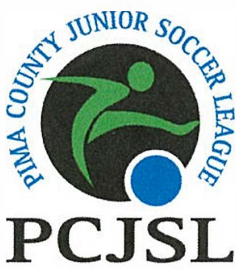


January 11, 2017

Ladies & Gentleman,

I am very glad to see Mr. Pederson's letter on behalf of the Celtic Festival. He has raised a number of misconceptions and misunderstandings which I welcome the opportunity to correct and clarify. Here are the seven most glaring faulty assumptions:

1. This is a debate between "certain soccer teams and all other interested parties." This simply is not true. This is a debate between the Rillito Park Foundation and youth and adult soccer, lacrosse, football, rugby, ultimate Frisbee and other field sport recreation as well as hundreds of thousands of taxpaying families across our county who care more about the health of our children than having horse racing 18 days a year in the middle of town. These youth and adult sports alone represent between 15 and 20,000 folks living throughout Pima County. Kids and teams throughout Pima County and living in every District play regularly at Rillito.
2. Youth soccer wants to convert Rillito to soccer fields instead of using the 119 other fields throughout the city and county. This is just flat wrong. Youth soccer already uses all 119 fields available to capacity. We have as many as four different teams all using the same field to practice on many fields. Clubs ability to add kids is hampered by the lack of places to play. As our county grows in population we are unable to accommodate significant growth in the sport because there simply aren't enough fields to accommodate more teams. If we had the maximum number of fields at Rillito and a tournament facility at Kino we would still have far fewer fields than we need. Why? As Pima County grew over the last 50 years we did not require developers to leave real estate for parks. Consequently, it has been estimated that Pima County has only 40% of the available field and park space that it should for a community of our size. Believe me convenience and underutilization are not issues.
3. Youth sports should use fields at the local high schools. This cannot be done. We would love to have access to high school fields. However, there is no school district in Pima County which will allow outside leagues and teams to use their fields. Liability, wear and tear and maintenance are just a few of the reasons given. Bottom line, high school fields are not available to outside youth or adult sports.
4. Youth sports want to convert Rillito to sports fields as a matter of convenience. Wrong again. With a need for 60% more park space, a growing population and the health needs of our community, park space at Rillito is important regardless of where the kids who play there live. Right now families south and west of I-10 regularly trek to Rillito. We have every field in town reserved to capacity and we desperately need more fields. Additionally, the neighborhood closes to Rillito happens to be a low to low middle class neighborhood. Many families without a car or only one car shared by several in the family—a car not available week nights to drive children across town for sports, not mention other difficulties in their lives which make such travel impossible. More fields within walking and bicycling distance and right on the bus route would enable more under privileged kids the chance to play.
5. Soccer families pay \$120 a month in registration fees so surely they can afford to drive across town for practice. In fact, families pay at most \$75 A YEAR or \$6.25 a month in registration fees to play recreational soccer and at the very highest level of competition \$375 A YEAR or \$31.25 a month. This



includes uniforms. On top of that PCJSL provides scholarship financial help to families that have trouble paying even this much. With the help of the Conquistadores PCJSL will pay out roughly \$10,000 in scholarship money this year. On top of that, individual clubs (all Pima County AYSA clubs and the AYSO Challenge program are part of PCJSL) run fundraisers like tournaments to raise additional scholarship funds. For example, last year the Tucson Soccer Academy paid out \$55,000 in financial aid helping over 120 families enroll their kids in soccer who otherwise could not afford to play.

6. A new tournament site near Kino can fill the youth sports needs that exist at Rillito. This premise shows a complete misunderstanding of soccer and the county's plans for the real estate at Rillito. If a tournament site is built at Kino it will be managed for tournaments and not weekly practices and league play. There will be cost prohibitive charges to use the fields for anything other than tournaments. This is quite simply an "apples and oranges" comparison. Additionally, while it is true that clubs run tournaments in Tucson to raise money for the kids that couldn't otherwise play, tournaments are a small part of what youth soccer provides our kids. Youth soccer provides opportunities for kids at every level from recreational to the highly competitive level. Only a small percentage of our kids play at the higher level. Most of our kids play in the less competitive even recreational levels where they practice and play games on weekends in Tucson. 90% or more of the use that Rillito and the other 119 fields get from youth sports is for practices and league games played on Saturdays by strictly local teams, as opposed to tournaments. This league schedule is far more important to our kids than tournaments.
7. Moving the race track will destroy other uses of Rillito such as special events and the farmers market. Actually the very opposite is true. Moving the race track and thus freeing up 40% of the real estate, will enhance ALL other uses of the park. No one has ever suggested eliminating the Farmers Market should the race track be moved. In fact, moving the race track would give space for expanding the Farmers Market. Removing the race track would not eliminate special events, it would enhance them. It would create more space for all users and thus more flexibility for NRPR in scheduling a variety of uses there including special events. On the other hand if the race track stays and is allowed to conduct fall racing, that race schedule will most certainly conflict with special event planning. Fall racing was originally proposed to occur between mid-October and mid-November. That schedule would eliminate the "inflexible" Celtic November date and kill the Celtic Festival in Tucson.

Thankfully, Mr. Pederson has submitted his letter as it brings to the forefront the many misconceptions, and lack of understanding regarding how youth soccer and other sports operate, the significance of the need to develop Rillito as a park and the reasons why horseracing is in direct conflict with virtually every other use of the facility including special events.

Sincerely,

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