

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Plum Borough Council justifies their recent actions in response to the claims & allegations of the PBAA

Plum Borough has decided to terminate the lease with the Plum Borough Athletic Association because the athletic association has refused to cooperate with the Borough and abide by the conditions set forth in the lease agreement as well as with borough and state regulations. The athletic association has refused to obtain permission from Borough council for construction projects on Borough property. Regardless of the lease agreement, any association occupying public property does not have the right to make improvements to that property without the permission of the owners; plum borough council is the elected representatives of the property owners. The athletic association has also failed to get the required permits for their construction projects. Even though the Borough has repeatedly indicated that there will be no fees charged, the association refused to obtain permits as required by state law. The association has also refused to notify the Borough of special events or even to assist the Borough by providing a schedule for their season. Borough council has also suggested and requested that the association have an independent audit performed to provide some accountability to those residents who pay for their children to participate. To date, no audit has been completed.

Over the past few years, Borough council and Borough staff members have received numerous complaints from borough residents about the inequitable and unfair practices of those who manage the association. Residents whose children have participated in the athletic association's programs over the past few years have complained of vindictive and spiteful retribution for simply questioning the practices of those in control of the association such as the requirement to purchase the children's uniforms from company owned by a board member of the PBAA. Residents have also complained that there is no accountability within the organization and there is no accounting for fees collected or for expenses. As the entity which provides the use of public property at no cost to the association, the Borough was obligated to investigate this matter.

After conducting a preliminary investigation into the financial practices of the PBAA, which only uncovered more questions than answers, the Plum Borough Police Department turned the case over to the Allegheny County District Attorney's office for further investigation. The Borough is also aware that the association has failed to provide audited expense receipts and properly account for the \$135,000 in grant funds they received from the state as is required by law.

It has been, and will remain, the goal of Plum Borough to help establish and or support a fair and accountable parent's organization, either through the existing Plum Borough athletic association or the creation of a new community organization. Our hope is to support and establish an organization that provides for open participation from all of the residents involved in Plum Borough baseball and softball. This organization must have the proper financial controls and accounting practices in place to ensure those individuals who pay for their children to participate are not paying more than necessary. The organization should be a partner with the Borough and must cooperate with the community and the borough staff to ensure that all rules and regulations are followed and that the activities of the athletic association are conducted in unity with the Borough. The organization must agree to have community oversight to ensure that the rights of all borough residents, not only those who participate in athletics, are protected while the association utilizes public property at no cost.

It is not the goal of Plum Borough to increase the size of government or public programs. It is our desire to have a strong community organization that works with the residents and has a great reputation within the community. Plum Borough has no desire to take over or operate any community association. As a last resort, and only to prevent a loss of athletic opportunities for our children, the Borough would temporarily do whatever is necessary to see that the children of our community do not suffer until this organization, or another organization, can provide these activities equitably and with full accountability.

To suggest to the residents of this community that the Plum Borough council has undertaken these steps for political benefit is an insult to the intelligence of the residents of this community. It is extremely easy to make such a bold accusation without substantiation. The reasons for the recent actions of the Plum Borough council are clearly enumerated and substantiated in the preceding paragraphs. These actions are not personal and have taken place after months of attempting to obtain the cooperation of the athletic association have failed. It has been stated by certain members of the association that these actions come as a complete shock; that they were not aware of the obligation to obtain permission from the property owners or to obtain the proper permits. Yet the Borough staff has repeatedly informed them of the requirements for years and these conditions and requirements are clearly enumerated in the proposed new lease agreement which the borough provided to the athletic association in 2010. The athletic association has been aware of the Borough Council's intention for more than a year. Representatives from the association met with the council finance committee on more than one occasion to discuss them in 2010 and 2011; yet they refused to agree to the rules to which the rest of the community must adhere.

It is not the borough's intention to take over this organization; and there is absolutely no intent to use the Borough athletic fields for anything other than recreation. It has been suggested by those in the athletic association that the Borough intends to take over those fields for commercial development. This is an absolute lie. The Borough has no intentions to use this property. Furthermore, the public property on which these fields reside is entirely in the floodplain and therefore cannot be developed. Even if the borough had these intentions, it is simply not permissible. These accusations are simply an attempt by the athletic association to divert the attention of the residents and the media away from their own violations and mismanagement. Plum Borough does not want to run a community organization. Plum Borough wants to support and foster fair and accountable community organizations.

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