

## Plans to expand field use riles Lincroft neighbors Officials taking look at proposal

---

BY KEVIN PENTON (732) 643-4009 or [kpenton@app.com](mailto:kpenton@app.com) • STAFF WRITER  
Asbury Park Press • FEBRUARY 3, 2010

---

**MIDDLETOWN** — For years, Mary Mahoney and dozens of other Lincroft residents have lived adjacent to a recreational field that various sports teams use for practice.

On Monday, dozens of the residents attended a Middletown Township Committee meeting to voice their opposition to the municipality's proposal to expand usage of the field at West Front Street Park to actual games.

In particular, the township never notified the residents that, along with installing an artificial turf field, it was considering adding light towers, a public address system and a snack bar to the site, Mahoney said.

"Where was the transparency?" Mahoney asked township committee members, drawing applause from many who sat in the crowd. "None of us knew anything about this."

Currently, activities at the site do not draw a crowd, as it is used primarily for practice, said Sarah Hammond, a resident. With the change, the neighborhood would get overwhelmed with cars because of inadequate parking at the site and with noise pollution from the PA system, she said.

"From Aug. 1 to November, there will be no rest in my home," said Hammond, who noted that her backyard is about 100 feet from the field.

In December, Middletown awarded a \$194,700 contract for engineering work on the proposed fields in Lincroft and Croydon Hall to Manalapan's CMX Engineering. The plan is under design and has not been finalized, said Anthony Mercantante, Middletown's administrator. The fields would be used for sports such as football, soccer, lacrosse and field hockey.

Rather than expand the West Front Street Park site, Middletown had preferred to install the turf field at either Thorne Middle School or Thompson Middle School, township officials said. Middletown would have paid for the construction and leased the land from the district.

After discussing the proposal for several months, Middletown and Middletown Township School District officials could not reach an agreement, they said.

The district had preferred to see the field at Nut Swamp Elementary School, believing there would be inadequate parking at either Thompson or Thorne, said Christopher Parton, its attorney. But Middletown found the Nut Swamp site to be too hilly, requiring a significant amount of leveling, Mayor Gerard Scharfenberger said.

Following Monday's public outcry, township officials are currently reviewing the plan to see what can be amended, said Scharfenberger, who could not pinpoint when any potential changes to the proposal would be released.

"The plans are not etched in stone," Scharfenberger said. "We may make adjustments to it."