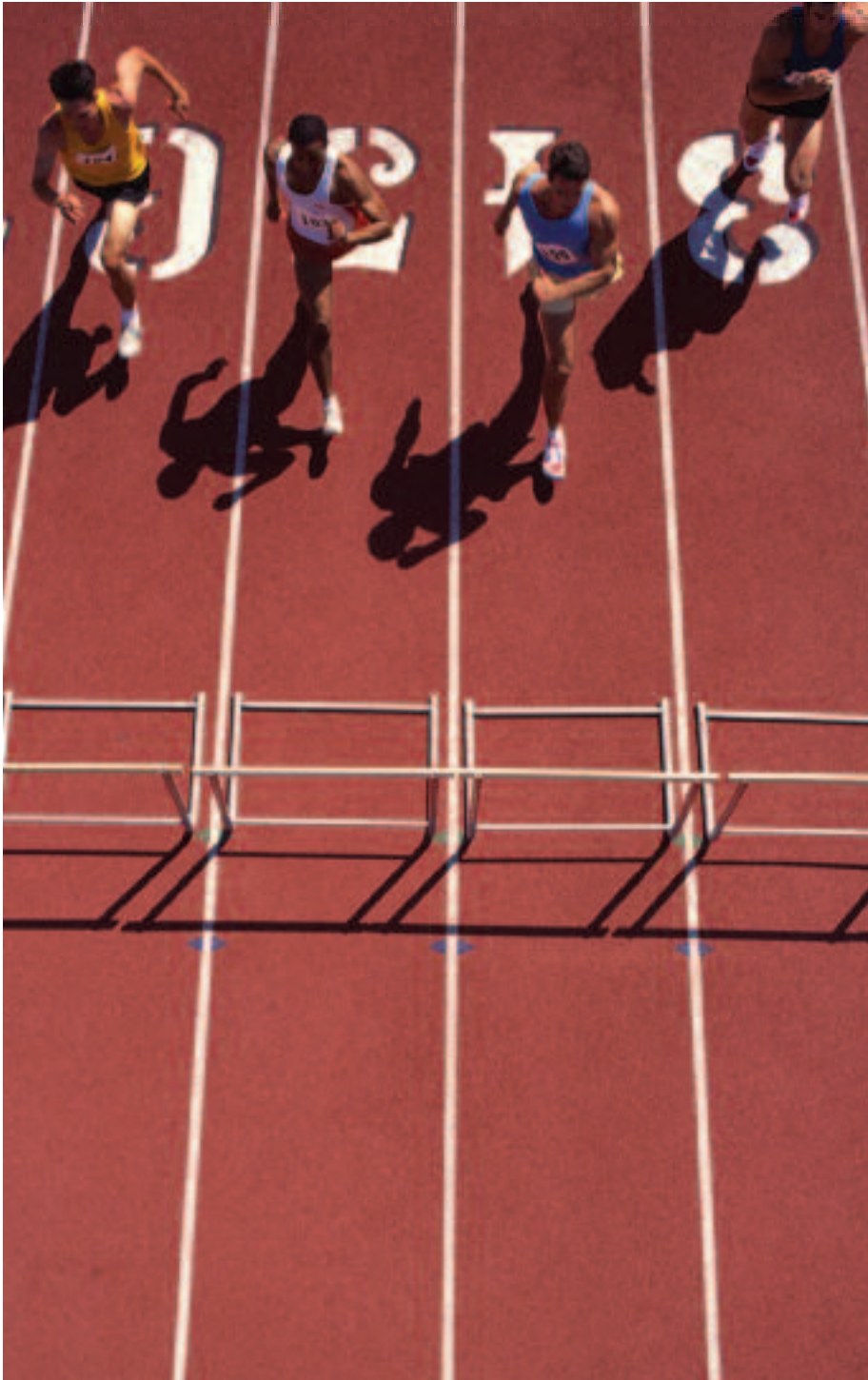


Roselle and Its Schools

Saving and Achieving Together



By Garrett Smith
Mayor, Roselle



Among the items that will be built through the school-town partnership is a new track. Currently, Abraham Clark High School's track team is nationally ranked, but they can't host home meets because we don't have a track in Roselle. The team spends its afternoons jogging and sprinting through the high school hallways.

Finding ways to make significant improvements to our communities without increasing taxes is one of the most difficult tasks we as municipal officials face. Too often we are forced to choose the lesser of two evils when it comes time to make our budget for the year: raise property taxes or abandon programs that contribute positively to the quality of life in our municipality.

I AM A FIRM BELIEVER THAT ONE OF THE BEST DECISIONS A COMMUNITY CAN MAKE IS TO INVEST IN ITS YOUTH.

So when an opportunity such as the one we now have in Roselle comes along—one that allows us to build a new school building, two new turf football fields and a state-of-the-art rubberized track at no additional cost to taxpayers—we should both seize the opportunity and study the finances of it carefully so we are better able to spot opportunities for smarter spending in the future.

We have a success story in the making in Roselle that I believe is important to share with municipal officials statewide who are grappling with the same issues and constraints.

By working closely with the superintendent of our public school system, Dr. Elnardo J. Webster, our borough government was able to identify several pressing areas of concern in our school system. The

overwhelming sentiment was that we need more space in our schools and to modernized athletic facilities.

Knowing we could not justify increasing taxes to take on one of these projects, let alone all of them, Dr. Webster and I searched for creative sources of financing. We discovered that the Board of Education is spending approximately \$600,000 per year to lease classroom space in other communities for its special services and pre-kindergarten students.

If we could use our partnership to bond for construction of a school building large enough to accommodate those students and could do it for annual payments of less than \$600,000 the arrangement would make financial sense. We wouldn't be spending any more money than we currently do. We would essentially be turning an expense into an investment in our own community.

It turns out the numbers were even better than we anticipated. A 33,500 square-foot school building would cost us less than \$12 million, which

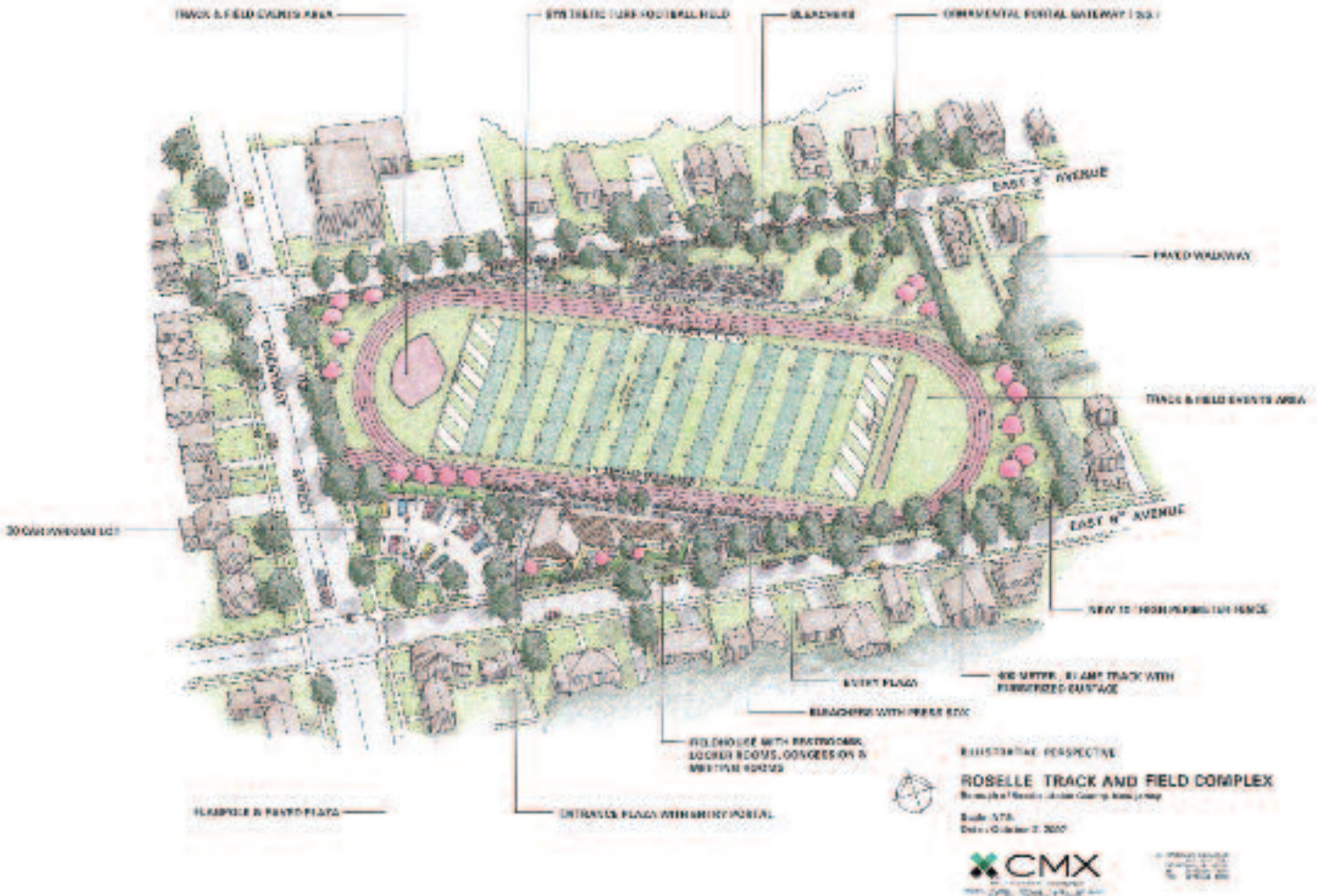
organizations, such as Pop Warner football, call home.

The numbers told us we would be able to create a brand new football

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would put our annual payments at approximately \$400,000. When we discovered this, we requested estimates for upgrading our athletic facilities at both Ralph Arminio Field, where our high school football team plays, and Sylvester Land Field, the field several of our youth sports

stadium at our high school field, complete with an upgraded turf field, brand new locker rooms and a track. We would also be able to pay for a turf football field at the youth sports complex at Sylvester Land Field. Again—at no additional cost to our taxpayers.



This artist's rendering shows the plans for a new track and football field at Ralph Arminio Field in Roselle.

These proposed improvements will help to solve two chronic problems in our borough that community members have been frustrated with for years: overcrowding in our classrooms and the poor condition of our athletic facilities.

The new school building will free up space in each of the school district's three elementary schools, allowing each school's grade distribution to be restructured. This means our eighth graders will finally be able to move out of Abraham Clark High School and into an environment that's more suitable for their age. Parents have been requesting such a move for a long time and now we finally will have the facilities to accommodate their wish.

Parents of student-athletes have complained about the poor condition of our athletic facilities for decades. Our facilities are more than just out of date; they're downright inadequate.

Abraham Clark High School's track team is nationally ranked, but they can't host home meets because we

don't have a track in Roselle. The team spends its afternoons jogging and sprinting through the high school hallways. Our locker room facilities are in a state of decay and both of our football fields in town

are prone to flooding. The proposed project would change all this and finally give our students the facilities they deserve.

I am a firm believer that one of the best decisions a community can make is to invest in its youth. Improvements to student quality of life ultimately yield higher property values and a community full of successful, civic-minded citizens. Thinking of proposals in terms of their long-term pros and cons is important, because it is the

long-term effects that really shape the direction a community is taking.

Dr. Webster and I are currently working together to present our plan in detail to the Board of Education. As you may imagine, there

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are many good questions that must be answered.

Together we hope to achieve something that will improve both the borough and the school system, something that would not be possible unless we worked together.

The plan is also a reminder for all of us to take a good hard look at expenses and constantly question if there is smarter way to spend taxpayer dollars that we just haven't thought of yet. s



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