



Grant Park

Neighborhood Association

September 16, 2023

Dear Commissioner Ryan and Director Long:

We are writing regarding our continued efforts to get the Grant Bowl field into safe useable condition in an expeditious fashion. As you are aware, there is an urgent need to improve the field conditions at Grant Bowl field so it can once again be used by student athletes in our community.

On August 24th the Grant Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) sent the City Council and Portland Public Schools (PPS) leadership a letter detailing our concerns and our offer to be involved in a community solution to get the Grant Bowl field back into useable condition ASAP. We are disappointed we have not heard back from Commissioner Ryan or Director Long. That letter is attached. Given the developments that have occurred since our prior letter regarding the possible lease of the Grant Bowl to Portland Public Schools (PPS), we would like to provide further context and clarify our current position on the Grant Bowl issue.

We agree with the *Grant Bowl Community Coalition* that the lack of routine maintenance to the field (or communication about this lack of maintenance) by Parks is unacceptable, and we support their efforts to get student athletes back on the field this year. Given the funding situation at PP&R illustrated at the most recent Parks Board meeting, it seems likely that leasing the property to PPS may be the only way to safely reopen the field to organized athletics on a remotely acceptable timeline. However, we do have equity concerns regarding the proposal of granting PPS control of public park property that we would like to see addressed in any agreement between Parks and PPS regarding the Grant Bowl.

The Grant Bowl field and track is a well-loved and highly used public park asset, frequented by diverse groups of people from all over the city for valuable recreational activities. We are supportive of priority use for PPS student athletics and reserved uses, but also want to ensure that robust public access of our public park property remains centered in the Grant Bowl field repair efforts. If, after consultation with stakeholders (including non-PPS affiliated community members), PP&R determines that a lease to PPS is the best option for an expeditious field repair, ***it is imperative that any lease or agreement guarantees the public fee free, robust, casual, and unscheduled access to Grant Bowl for the entire duration of the lease/agreement term.***

Unfortunately, PPS has a poor track record of supporting public access at Grant Park. After the recent Grant Upper Field remodel (which is on joint Parks and PPS property), PPS has to this date succeeded in eliminating the historical casual and free public access to this valuable recreational asset. It is the subject of another GPNA initiative to restore informal public access to the Upper Field. Our letter on this issue (from April of 2023) is also attached. If we are to trust PPS to manage the Grant Bowl for the benefit of the whole community, Parks and PPS could start by restoring public access at the Upper Field. Additionally, based on this recent experience, we believe that ensuring continued public access at the Grant Bowl requires clear and legally enforceable wording in any contract between Parks and PPS - we are not willing to take PPS at its word on this matter.

Portland Parks & Recreation's mission is to provide equitable access to welcoming places, programs, and services that improve community health and our environment. In this case, this means ensuring long-term access to Grant Park for all parks users - including student athletes and the broader public. We support any solution that will allow for the replacement of Grant Bowl turf this year, **as long as it includes robust guarantees that the bowl and track remain accessible to the public for casual and organized use.**

We look forward to a response from your office on this matter.

Sincerely,
Grant Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) Board of Directors

cc:

Karen Guillen-Chapman, Policy Advisor & Parks Liaison, Commissioner Ryan

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