

## Statement to Legislative Committee

My name is John Taylor. I have resided in the Town of Griswold since 1985 and have been involved with the Griswold Youth Football Association since it's start eight years ago. I have coached at almost every level and have and still serve as the Association's Vice President for the last five years. I also currently chair Griswold's Parks and Recreation Commission.

Griswold Youth Football and the Griswold Soccer Club use the practice and game fields at Griswold High School. Both of these organizations operate at the same time of the year and have to co-exist with the high school's schedule. The Griswold Youth Football Association serves over 300 children from the Voluntown, Lisbon and Griswold Area. Griswold Soccer Club also serves about the same numbers and towns, and this year is running a spring program.

With the number of children in our football program we are not able to have all our teams practice at the same time and place. We are only able to accommodate our older travel program at the High School for practices. Our younger program is currently using space out in front of the Town Garage that is located on Route 138 and sometimes Hopeville State Park. Scheduling games can be tough. We have a flag football program of two to four teams, an in-house , non-travel program of four teams and our three team travel program. This requires scheduling of at least three games at home on weekends when the travel teams are playing out of town and up to six games when they are scheduled at home. Our travel schedule is assigned by the Southern New England Youth Football Conference. This is a 14 town conference covering all of southeastern Connecticut of which we are a member. Last year, we had to move one of our home games to Norwich as well as have a few practices there due to conflicts with the school. As a league we try to keep fees for participation as low as possible, therefore the income that we can generate from concession at our home travel games is very important. All of the youth sports leagues in town pay facility usage fees to the town for using the high school. That translates to about \$4000 for just the youth football league.

Currently, the only space dedicated to youth sports in our area is the Jewett City Little League Complex, which has three small game fields for baseball. These only accommodate the younger players and cover both softball and baseball. There are about 500 children involved in this league. The older Junior league is forced to play games between Griswold High School and Lisbon Meadows Park. Both these locations are used by the respective town's school teams and as such, scheduling is a problem. Practices for all levels are spread out all over town, wherever there is an open spot, the high school, the town garage, Hopeville Park. Space is at a premium.

Griswold High School is a nice, safe facility, but as you can see, with the number of children involved and limited space for the school programs as well as the youth programs the fields at the school are overused to say the least. Usage fees for these fields also puts a strain on the budgets for the non-profit leagues. Some of these other areas that are being used such as the Town Garage cause some safety concerns as well as logistical problems for the leagues that use them.

The space at the nursery could accommodate game and practice fields for both football and soccer as well as a game field for the Junior League Baseball. Other considerations could also be accommodated at this site such as a walking track or basketball courts. This could be a wonderful, safe location for the area's children and residents to be proud of. I can see no other use which will benefit the area's residents than this proposal.