

Town of Atherton

Compiled by the Town of Atherton City Clerk Ms. Theresa DellaSanta

Measure M

“Should the Town permit the Menlo-Atherton Little League to improve the baseball field and surrounding areas at Holbrook-Palmer Park, including covered seating for spectators, an improved playing area for children, and new restrooms for all park users, using private funds only?”

Impartial Analysis of Measure M

The Town of Atherton has received a proposal from the Menlo-Atherton Little League to construct certain improvements to the existing Little League baseball diamond in Holbrook-Palmer Park. It proposes a number of improvements to the field and surrounding facilities, ranging from leveling the field, erecting temporary removable outfield fences, and construction of a small electric scoreboard and permanent foul line poles. Of perhaps greater significance is a desire to install covered seating grandstands and new restrooms that will result in permanent improvements to the area. The cost of such improvements will be paid for by the Menlo-Atherton Little League using only private funds. There will be no taxpayer’s funds used to complete the proposed improvements.

The Menlo-Atherton Little League proposal has not been through the normal Atherton planning process at this time. The City Council has determined that it wants citizen input with respect to the significant permanent impacts of the application. The measure therefore asks voters to decide whether permanent structures associated with the Little League baseball diamond area of Holbrook-Palmer Park should be allowed to be constructed after appropriate planning review; specifically whether or not to allow construction of covered spectator seating, an improved playing field, and new restroom facilities in this area of the Park.

If approved by the voters, the grandstand and restroom permanent facilities will be allowed in Holbrook-Palmer Park; however, if rejected by the voters, this measure will prohibit such permanent improvements in the Park. Voter approval of the measure will not automatically grant the Little League improvement proposal which will still have to go through the normal Town land use review process.

/s/ **William B. Connors**, City Attorney

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Arguments in support of or in opposition to the proposed laws are the opinions of the authors.

Argument in Favor of Measure M

Atherton has been offered a wonderful gift which will cost nothing. There is no downside – only tremendous upside for the community.

Over the years, the baseball/softball field and surrounding area at Holbrook-Palmer Park have become dilapidated and less safe. To solve this problem, the Menlo-Atherton Little League has submitted a plan to enhance, beautify and make safer an area of the park which is regularly used by hundreds (if not thousands) of Athertonians each year. The plan will be funded entirely by private donations from people who believe deeply that we deserve a beautiful, safe park for everyone to enjoy.

This generous gift includes various enhancements to the existing baseball/softball field, complete with:

- covered stands and dugouts designed to blend perfectly with existing park structures;
- new fencing to keep spectators and other park users out of harm's way; and
- a re-surfaced field to make it safer for baseball, softball, soccer, and lacrosse, for which all or part of the field is used.

As part of the plan, the Little League has offered to resurface the park's tennis courts as well. This is a much needed improvement which the Town has not provided funding.

This proposal is not limited to the baseball/softball field and tennis courts. Indeed, it benefits all who enjoy the park. Many citizens are well aware that the park is in dire need of new restrooms. The plan includes new restrooms near the tennis courts which will be open for all park users. In addition, the Little League has offered to plant trees in surrounding areas to further beautify the landscape.

In this time of economic uncertainty, we have to rely on generous citizens to fill gaps left by tight government budgets. Please accept this gift to the Town. Vote YES on Measure M.

/s/ **Robert B Hellman, Jr** August 15, 2012
Atherton resident & former board member & coach M-A Little League

/s/ **Robert Oyster** August 15, 2012
Atherton resident & member of Park & Recreation Commission

/s/ **Gina Ryan** August 15, 2012
Atherton resident & Board Member & Finance Chairperson, M-A Little League

/s/ **David Wright** August 15, 2012
Atherton resident & former Chairman of Atherton Park & Recreation Commission

/s/ **Steve Bouret** August 15, 2012
Atherton resident & former Board Member & coach, MA Little League

Rebuttal to Argument in Favor of Measure M

A new baseball field for our Park is a good idea but the presented design is too large and will intrude on the park and its surroundings. Unfortunately, the Town Council's decision to require a vote on the design has now presented an "up or down" decision without room for negotiation. In light of what might happen at the park (moving the library), it is difficult to tell what the effect of both buildings would be to the overall appearance and function of the Park. Additional parking for the library patrons as well as the spectators who are supposed to fill the 200 seats at the baseball stadium would seemingly overwhelm available parking and would require further paving of meadow and grass areas.

It would seem prudent to determine whether or not the library is going into the park prior to deciding on whether to build a new ball field of the size and scope as presented in this design. A no vote on Measure M would allow us to build a baseball field that would better suit the surroundings – not something that might overwhelm the Park and its environment. We urge a NO vote on Measure M.

/s/ **Frank Merrill** August 20, 2012
Atherton resident & member, Park & Recreation Commission

/s/ **Rachel M. Croft** August 20, 2012
Atherton resident and member, Atherton Tree Committee

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Argument Against Measure M

Building a baseball stadium with 200 covered seats in the middle of Atherton's only park is a bad idea. These precious open spaces and peaceful settings are a priceless asset to this Town and need to be preserved for all users of the Park. The Park has been very protective of its open spaces and does not need a massive, permanent baseball-only field which would reduce the enjoyment of others and by design would restrict uses for other sports.

In the Town Council majority's haste to bring this project forward for a vote, there is now no place for negotiation as to what should be included in the new design. We are forced to make an "up or down" decision regarding this project. Why is there covered seating for 200 spectators? Where would cars for 200 spectators park, especially if the Library is also built in the Park? Is this baseball park intended for other uses? Will night games with lights be next? Covered grandstands won't make the excitement of baseball any more valuable for the young players. The proposed field will not be used for an increased number of players. In fact, by Little League's own records, only about one third of the 520 registered players are Atherton residents. A 210 foot perimeter fence cyclone fence down both baselines is not removable and will affect the visible appearance of the meadow. The same can be said for a lighted scoreboard with advertising and messages.

Little League is welcomed in the park. It is certainly important to encourage young athletes to increase physical activity and participate in team sports. However, a stadium of this magnitude is out of place at Holbrook-Palmer. Please vote NO in hopes that eventually we can create a baseball field that "fits" our Park.

/s/ **Frank Merrill** August 15, 2012

/s/ **Rachel Croft** August 15, 2012

Rebuttal to Argument Against Measure M

The statement in opposition to Measure M is inaccurate in material respects. The plan does not involve a "stadium." Rather, it is to enhance the existing field and surrounding area to provide a safer and more pleasant experience for all park users. Nor is the field intended for "baseball only." All open space will remain intact and there will be no impact on other users or activities.

The design, which is and will remain available for public viewing, is understated. The architecture is consistent and blends well with other park structures. The covered seating is not "massive." While code dictates 18" per occupant, the design is not intended to accommodate 200 people. The anticipated use is for 100 people seated comfortably using 36", which is just enough to accommodate family and friends of players at a typical game. There will be no increased traffic.

Contrary to the opposition's statements: The outfield fence is removable. The Little League has committed to remove the fence at the end of every season and during the season as needed. There will be no advertising. There will be no lights for night games.

We encourage all voters to review the plans; they are not what the opposition wants you to believe. Atherton deserves an improvement of the dilapidated field at Holbrook Palmer Park. This is a wonderful gift with no cost to taxpayers. It may never be offered again.

Please vote YES on Measure M – for our children and families.

/s/ **David Wright** August 23, 2012

/s/ **Bob Hellman** August 23, 2012

/s/ **Bob Oyster** August 23, 2012