

Supervisor Brian Kulpa's January 2022 Column



At the final Town Board meeting of 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Amherst Central Park was unanimously approved by the board. In partnership with Mensch Capital Partners and thanks to Dan Hamister, we have simplified the Amherst Central Park project on the former Westwood Country Club site and have an outline for immediate next steps.

This MOU redefines the Amherst Central Park project, which continues to move forward with Westwood's acquisition at its core. I thank Dan Hamister for proposing a straight-forward transaction to focus on creating a world-class park for the Town. With much work still to be done, we can focus with specificity on what an Amherst Central Park will include and how it will be designed.

Many are asking, so what happens next? Brownfield cleanup must happen first. Mensch Capital Partners will handle the remediation of the 171-acre site, which operated as a golf course for 70 years before closing in 2014. I anticipate we will be clarifying a timeline for this step in early 2022.

After that phase is complete, in accordance with the MOU, Mensch will build the infrastructure for a park and will transform the former Westwood Country Club into Amherst Central Park, and then sell the property to the Town. The park will be a center of community recreation and civic life, including a shell and core of a building for MusicalFare and a rehabilitated clubhouse.

In a recent interview with The Buffalo News, explained that we are commissioning a park. When Mensch is done, the Town of Amherst will purchase a park that will include assets for all to enjoy, including passive and active spaces. This park will be a destination.

While moving forward with the Amherst Central Park project, the Town has also invested in new athletic fields. In October, we broke ground on the new Williamsville Junior Football complex adjacent to the North Amherst Recreation Center. Around the same time, we announced that Audubon Golf Course, which performed very well in 2021 under Indigo Golf Partner's management, would remain an 18-hole course. Additionally, new diamonds for Amherst Girls' Softball and Town-wide hard ball are in construction.

My team in Town Hall is focused on seeking funding sources, including grants, to support this ambitious project. This community project has gained support from leaders and agencies throughout the region and state; the initial planning efforts were assisted with funding through a New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

grant. Our effort now is to continue to gather community feedback while refining the overall Amherst Central Park plan, putting the project in an ideal position to receive additional funding.

My goal is to create an anchor in our community for the next 100 years. Amherst Central Park will satisfy a generational need to see Amherst have a heart.