



Dr Anthony Borrelli

Niles-Park Ridge School District 64 Board of Directors

ahb@weil4feet.com

Dear Dr Borrelli,

On behalf of Go Green Park Ridge (GGPR), local environmental group, and the concerned parents and community members it represents, I wish to present the following proactive steps to improve both the cost-efficiency and safety of lawn care practices on school grounds. Turf grass does not follow a typical school structure and schedule, as its health directly depends on the practices from years previously. Though the School District's contract with TruGreen ends in January of 2019, the district can act right now to help grow strongly rooted, functional, and aesthetically pleasing grass that pose limited to no risk for our children and the surrounding environment.

We respectfully request that the topic of "*Moving D64 Toward Sustainable Lawn Care,*" be added to the Board meeting agenda for the March 13th, 2017. We can only achieve the desired results if the School District agrees to do or begin planning for the following during the upcoming meeting:

1. Draft a minimal qualifications list used to evaluate the current lawn care contract in order to assess its costs and benefits, including:
 - a. Banning the routine use of any lawn care products with the EPA Signal Words of "WARNING" or "DANGER"; and
 - b. Practicing lawn aeration, mowing high, and leaving the clippings on the lawn to further reduce the need for chemical inputs for a green and healthy school grounds;
2. Develop a method for analyzing the cost and/or benefit of any changes instituted to the current contract including the "spot treatment" methodology. This is particularly important since changes to the TruGreen contract in January 2016 included the move to spot treatment of weeds but without any indication of an assessment strategy.
3. Reduce the fertilizer application rate of three times per year to the recommended two applications to save the district more than an estimated \$1,000 and reduce risk of exposure.
 - a. Restrict TruGreen application to once in the spring and once in the fall. Summer fertilization adds little benefit to the grass plant and may actually stress grass as it encourages the plant to grow

during unfavorable conditions such as drought. Organic fertilization provides the most benefit in the fall to prepare the turf's roots for the winter and enable a quick bounce-back the next spring. Moving the summer organic fertilization to the fall to replace TruGreen's synthetic fertilizer and broadcast herbicide application will greatly benefit the schools' grounds and save more than \$1,500 as the district now spends \$2,791.75 on fall fertilization (\$4,328 current summer - \$2,791 current fall = savings of \$1,537).

4. Adopt a formal lawn maintenance policy that identifies Integrated Pest Management as the preferred strategy for pest and weed control and clearly outlines responsibilities, tasks, and rules for lawn care managers/contracted service providers. The policy should follow language and principles outlined in the GGPR summary response submitted to you on January 10, 2017.
5. Construct a Request for Qualification ahead of contract discussions in January of 2019 to open the management of School District 64's grounds to companies that can cost-effectively fulfill the lawn care maintenance expectations and requirements set by the newly adopted IPM policy. This will allow an "apples to apples" cost comparison between proposals;

GGPR, with the support of the 501(c)3 non-profit Midwest Pesticide Action Center, is prepared to help District 64 with this switch to IPM and ultimately natural lawn care every step of the way and provide examples of adopted IPM and natural lawn care programs currently being used. By being proactive today, School District 64 can achieve grounds that are risk averse for the health of our children and community, while still upholding the cost-efficiency and aesthetic thresholds expected of the district. The more we can move forward on meeting the goals expressed here, the more prepared we will be when the grass starts to green.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Amy Bartucci

Founder, Go Green Park Ridge