



CITY HALL  
HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY

June 21, 2023

Dear Resident,

I hope you are doing well and enjoying the start to the summer. I write to update you on our efforts to modernize and improve our recreation offerings for children, and to provide you with some additional information as it relates to recreation soccer.

As residents may know, last year we took the step of hiring a new Division Head of Recreation who has been working diligently in upgrading and adding recreation options for children such as golf, volleyball, indoor pickleball, and more. Prioritizing and modernizing our Recreation Division continues to be a priority and focus of my administration, which we believe will lead to further, substantial quality of life upgrades for residents, and especially our children.

Several months ago, as a part of this process of modernizing and bringing our recreation department into best practices, it was discovered that there were certain financial irregularities related to the previous operations of the Recreation Division, most pertinently within our soccer programming. These irregularities have been referred to, and are now being investigated by, the appropriate entities. As a part of this process, we are seeking to bring all our recreation offerings into compliance with state law, while at the same time continuing to provide a high level of service to our children in the fairest and most equitable way possible.

Soccer programming, much like several other recreation offerings in Hoboken, was provided through a third-party vendor paid by the City for services, a practice which has been the case for many years. As required by state law, and to provide equal opportunities for all potential vendors, the legal department advised that the City should be issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for all recreation services and vendors that are paid by the City above a certain threshold, including recreation soccer, which we did several weeks ago. (As an example, the City issued an RFP for instructional baseball in the spring, and the vendor that was awarded a contract - U.S. Sports Institute - provided a highly successful instructional baseball season for our children.)

In response to this RFP issued for recreation soccer, the City received two proposals. The entity that put forward a very competitive and attractive recreation soccer offering to the City is called Athletes Connection Toward Success (ACTS), providing soccer for children between the ages of 5 and 14 in a one-year contract. I encourage those who are interested to take a look at their full response to the RFP by going to [www.hobokennj.gov/docs/athlete-connection-toward-success-proposal](http://www.hobokennj.gov/docs/athlete-connection-toward-success-proposal).

ACTS is a non-profit organization that brings licensed coaches, counselors, trainers, and other professionals with extensive experience with other youth recreation soccer programs and organizations such as the South Hackensack Strikers, New York Red Bulls, Hackensack Junior

Soccer Association, and Our Training Academy, qualifications which I believe will provide a well-rounded soccer experience for our youth.

Athletes Connection Toward Success will offer at least one weekly practice, one weekly game, full uniform kits, an awards ceremony, training clinics for coaches and volunteers, and more throughout the eight-week program.

Unfortunately, Hoboken Youth Soccer League, the third-party vendor that provided fall recreation soccer in the past, was provided with the RFP but did not submit a proposal. Due to state contracting law, the City cannot award a contract to an entity that did not submit a proposal, as it would be legally impermissible to do so.

As both Mayor of Hoboken and as a parent of a child who participated in recreation soccer formerly operated by Hoboken Youth Soccer, I am very much appreciative to all its volunteers who have provided many hours of time to provide soccer resources to our children. Countless Hoboken youth, including my son, have gone through the Hoboken Youth Soccer program, and we are grateful to all of the participating volunteers, coaches, and parents.

I want to assure parents and volunteers who have been a part of Hoboken Youth Soccer, that this proposed new vendor will continue to utilize volunteer coaches, and that critical component of recreation soccer programming will remain in place. Additionally, ACTS and the Division of Recreation will set up a volunteer advisory board for the program, so Hoboken parents and volunteers can provide valuable input, to ensure that the programming meets the needs of our children and community.

I encourage anyone who would like to volunteer for this board, or to serve as a volunteer coach or in any other capacity, to contact our Recreation Division at [recreation@hobokennj.gov](mailto:recreation@hobokennj.gov).

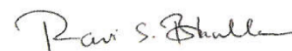
Additionally, to be transparent and clear to the public, the cost of the fall soccer program will become \$75, which will cover a new uniform, additional practices, trophies at the end of the season, and a more comprehensive program. For those who qualify for free or reduced lunch, the program will continue to be free of charge.

Finally, I want to let you know that while our options are limited this year for recreation soccer due to the factors above, I remain open to considering any and all vendors going forward that submit proposals to the City in response to an RFP as required by law, to soccer programming in future years.

When the contract with Athletes Connection Toward Success is adopted by the City Council tonight, I am confident that its new offerings will be well received by all children participating in the program and will only serve to further enhance the recreation soccer experience.

I hope this explanation has been helpful, and I look forward to a successful fall recreation season!

Sincerely,



Ravi S. Bhalla  
Mayor