

WEST U ESSENTIALS MAGAZINE – FEBRUARY 2020

WEST UNIVERSITY MAYOR INSIGHTS

JUST THE FACTS ON THE TRI-SPORTS DECISION

By Mayor Bob Higley

City Council realized that one the biggest hurdles that the Council faces on the Tri-Sports issue is conveying the facts to all West U taxpaying homeowners in a factual, concise manner. You deserve a statement that promotes a better understanding of the decision to deny the \$125,000 taxpayer cash subsidy for Tri-Sports, while continuing support by providing fields and utilities at no cost to Tri-Sports (estimated cost to taxpayer is \$130,000).

WHAT IS TRI-SPORTS?

- Tri-Sports is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.
- Tri-Sports was chartered 33 years ago by three private West U citizens in an effort to coordinate the use of fields by three privately registered youth sports associations (little league, softball and soccer).

WHAT IS WEST U?

- The City of West U, which represents the taxpaying West U homeowners, is a “home rule” municipal government with defined roles established in the City charter, State law and the State Constitution.

WHY WAS THE CASH SUBSIDY DENIED?

- Over numerous public and private meetings with City officials (including Council and staff), Tri-Sports officials failed to provide Council with information supporting all three requirements that are necessary for the City to comply with State law.
- Since its inception 33 years ago, Tri-Sports has now grown into an organization that attracts players from over 136 zip codes in the Houston metro area.
- Today, approximately 80% of the participants in the youth sports leagues come from these zip codes outside of West U.
- Many cities have residents who participate in the Tri-Sports leagues, but none of these cities give a cash subsidy in addition to field access and utilities at no charge.
- Until now, 100% of West U taxpayers were subsidizing all of the players from the greater Houston metro area who participate in the three youth sports leagues.

HOW MUCH?

- Based on player data provided by Tri-Sports, the leagues would have to increase their fees by \$15 per player to replace the prior \$125,000 West U taxpayer funded cash subsidy.
- The City of West U taxpayer still provides the West U Recreation Center Fields and utilities free of charge to these youth sports leagues (at an estimated cost of \$130,000)
- The City Council returned the \$125,000 taxpayer cash subsidy to all West U taxpayers in the form of a lower tax rate and taxes paid to the City.

LET'S AGREE

Youth sports is a great activity for all players and their families. All of the communities in the greater Houston metro area benefit from the youth sports provided by little league, softball and soccer. West U is not unique in the benefits received from Tri-Sports.

In the 33 years since it was created, Tri-Sports has grown well beyond the original borders of West U. Tri-Sports and West U should be proud of our individual and joint successes.

The City Council's decision on who should bear the expense for participation in Tri-Sports will not change the arc of Tri-Sports' growth nor alter their financial integrity.

The different roles of city government and youth sports is best illustrated by our vastly different means of obtaining revenue and our very different mandates.

Homeowners in West U are compelled to pay taxes. Youth sports is funded by registration fees and sponsorships. Youth sports are elective family expenditures and property taxes are not.

Our goal as Council is to ensure that West U remains one of the best communities in Texas by ensuring the decisions we make put the taxpaying homeowners at the center of every discussion. It's time to move forward.