

February 15, 2024

To whom it may concern:

This letter is in support of the project to bring artificial turf and lights to baseball and softball fields here in Salem. This is a tremendous opportunity to do something that will make an immediate impact on so many young people here in Salem. It is a creative and collaborative solution to a long-standing problem and I am proud that Willamette University can continue to live up to its motto of Non nobis solum nati sumus, or not unto ourselves alone are we born. The idea that we as a university are part of a larger city, community, region, and beyond is something that is understood by everyone who works and studies here. It is why we are very proud to be able to be a part of this project and to work to make our baseball and softball fields available to the community in ways similar to what we have been able to provide throughout the years in our other spaces.

I came to Willamette University in 2012 as the Athletic Facilities and Operations Manager. In that role, I was responsible for scheduling our fields for our students and also working with community groups and other local organizations who wanted to use our spaces. I'm very proud of our ability to support community events such as the Awesome 3000 and Country Kids Relays, annual events that benefit the youth of Salem and the surrounding area. We have also hosted many other important community events, such as the Special Olympics Oregon state track meet and bocce tournament, CFC's professional soccer teams in Athletico and Athletica, and Oregon Amateur Basketball tournaments. We particularly like being involved with local high school sports and have enjoyed hosting Blanchett Catholic School for their football games when they didn't have a home, the Capitol City Classic Basketball Tournament, and South Salem baseball last spring after their field was vandalized and made unplayable.

In that role, I've also had to be the person for 11 years who has said no to so many local baseball and softball teams looking for space because our two fields are unplayable much of the spring. Even with South Salem last spring, we had to cancel their first four weeks of use because of bad weather and field conditions and the fact there are currently no other options here in Salem if teams want to get on an actual turf baseball or softball field. I am also the person who has to find locations for our teams to play their games when our fields can't be used and last year sent teams to Stayton and Canby for what we still called home games. I know our local high schools do the same and spend the first month of their seasons traveling to Portland, Eugene, and farther, to schools that have turf.

I hope this opportunity to impact our community doesn't slip past us as I believe this is a fantastic chance to make these fields available for Salem and the surrounding communities and impact the lives of so many young people and their families. Our community is excited about the impact this could have and I am hopeful the state legislature will feel the same.

Sincerely,

Rob Passage
Director of Intercollegiate Athletics
Willamette University