

## **Pemberton Township awarded \$1.1 million for West End Park**

By David Levinsky Staff writer | Posted: Monday, July 13, 2015 6:30 pm

PEMBERTON TOWNSHIP — The township is planning to use \$1.1 million in state funding to move forward with development of a multipurpose recreational complex off Scrapetown Road.

The funding was awarded by the state Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres program. The program helps fund purchases of open space, as well as park improvements on public lands.

The award consists of a \$750,000 grant and \$350,000 no-interest loan. Local officials said funding is expected to be enough to develop as many as five grass fields for soccer, field hockey and lacrosse, plus construction of a building for concessions, restrooms and storage, a handicapped-accessible walking trail, a playground, parking lot and field irrigation system.

The improvements, known as the West End Park Development Project, would be made on 26 acres adjacent to an existing park and the Dominique Johnson Recreation Center.

The township acquired the land from Light and Love Evangelistic Church after receiving a \$230,000 grant from Burlington County's Local Open Space Preservation Program.

Last year the township also received a \$40,000 municipal park development grant from the county to fund trail improvements, landscaping and rest benches at the recreation center building.

In announcing the state funding, Township Mayor David Patriarca said it would allow the town to take another major step forward toward completing the park upgrade.

"The West End Park Development Project has been on the drawing board for more than four years, and with the help of the Green Acres grant, it will be closer to completion," Patriarca said.

The Township Council is expected to consider a resolution to accept the award during its meeting Wednesday night.

Because the funds are provided as reimbursement, the council also will be asked to adopt a bond ordinance to borrow the required funds. The township would be reimbursed with the Green Acres money after construction of the park improvements are completed.

The funding is part of an \$88.5 million open space appropriations bill sent to Gov. Chris Christie last month. It represents the last money from a \$400 million bond referendum approved by voters in 2009 to fund open space, farmland and historic preservation projects.

Last November, voters approved using a portion of New Jersey's corporate business tax revenues for that purpose.

Pemberton Township Recreation and Senior Services Director Paula Kosko said the project is the biggest parks improvement undertaken in the township since it rebuilt the Imagination Kingdom playground in 2010.

She said the timing of the funding announcement was fortuitous coming off the U.S. Women's Soccer Team's victory at the World Cup on July 5, since the park will serve as a complex for the Pemberton Soccer Club.

"We're very excited about it," Kosko said.

The soccer club's president Peggy Tibbens-Torres said the club teams have long used Pemberton Township High School's athletic fields for games and practices, but scheduling can be difficult and the fields aren't always in great condition for soccer.

"This would give Pemberton Soccer Club a home," she said. "I've been praying for four years this happens."