

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Regarding the Town of Ulysses' Proposed Acquisition of Land on Krums Corners

*Please note: This is recognized as a living document, which will be updated/amended with additional information as available.*

*Do you have a question not answered? Additional questions can be submitted to [clerk@townofulyssesny.gov](mailto:clerk@townofulyssesny.gov) for consideration of inclusion in a future FAQ draft.*

## Town's Proposal

### 1. What is the Town proposing to do?

All five members of the Ulysses Town Board voted [unanimously](#) on June 27, 2023, subject to permissive referendum, to purchase 30 acres for \$210,000 on Krums Corners Road (an approved subdivision of 2141 Kraft Road) to develop into a park and recreational space. An additional \$8,500 out of a dedicated reserve fund for recreational property was allocated to pay for regular costs associated with the acquisition of real property.

The Town Board was persuaded that there is a clear need for more sports fields. One advantage to the property on Krums Corners is that the size of the property (30 acres) would allow multiple uses, beyond sports fields, to be identified that could support the long-term physical, emotional, and mental health of the greater Ulysses community. Identified uses could be planned for and then developed as funding sources (grants, private donations, etc.) were identified.

### 2. Why does the Town need a park?

Parks have a demonstrated value to the public. Recreation is recognized as one of the best investments a community can make in the health and well-being of the public. [It is proven to help improve physical and mental health and strengthen communities.](#)

Insufficient recreational facilities have been an issue in Ulysses dating back until at least the 1990s, when Supervisor Doug Austic and the Town Board put together a committee to explore the issue of finding and buying land.

Currently, neither the Village or Town own a park or recreational space that could provide a variety of recreational (such as playing fields or a playground) or community uses.

There is no land within the Village that is available and suitable for the development of a recreation property.

### **3. Do local governments often own parks and recreation spaces?**

Yes, recreational space is commonly owned by towns and villages, and youth and adults commonly use properties that are not affiliated with a school district.

Currently in our area, publicly accessible recreational spaces are owned and managed by the [Town of Ithaca](#), the [Town of Newfield](#), the [Village of Dryden](#), the [Town of Dryden](#), the [Village of Groton](#), the Town of Lansing ([Myers Park](#), as well as the [Town Barn ball fields](#) and the [Town ball fields](#)), the [Hector Fire Department](#), and the [City of Ithaca](#). (Among many others in the wider region.)

Additionally, the Town of Enfield is currently developing a community park and Town Supervisor Redmond recently announced the completion of recently paved brand new basketball courts (Via her Facebook page, Stephanie Redmond-Town Supervisor, November 1, 2023) using grants and American Recovery Plan Act funds.

The Town is lucky to have nature preserves and parks within its limits, including the Jacksonville Park, Salo Drive Nature Preserve, Taughannock State Park and the Camp Barton future state park; however, none of these facilities provide sufficient space for playing fields or cannot be accessed without a fee (i.e., the state parks).

### **4. What is the Town's relationship to Trumansburg Community Recreation (TCR)?**

["Trumansburg Community Recreation \(TCR\)"](#) is a 501c3 non-profit corporation started in 2016. we are a group of dedicated Trumansburg volunteers who are working to develop more recreational opportunities and spaces for our community."

The Town of Ulysses has been meeting with representatives of TCR, the Trumansburg Central School District, and the Village of Trumansburg for several years about methods and opportunities to increase and support local recreational opportunities.

### **5. What would the Town's relationship with Trumansburg Community Recreation (TCR) be if the voters approve the purchase of the land?**

Public-private partnerships are very common for park development and maintenance. The [Friends of the Ithaca Youth Bureau](#) in Ithaca have been vital for the development and investment in Ithaca parks, including the recent enclosure of Cass Rink.

If the voters approve the purchase of the land, the Town would develop a Memorandum of Understanding with TCR to serve in a similar capacity, providing fundraising support, volunteer mobilization and professional expertise to the Town. They would defray costs to the taxpayer and fundraise on the Town's behalf.

Additionally, the Town would establish a recreation advisory committee, where members of the public, representatives from the Town Board, and representatives of TCR could work with our Town Planner to create an inclusive, publicly engaged process to develop proposals, seek public funding through county, state and federal grant sources, and work with the public to determine how to develop the park in an environmentally appropriate manner that addresses neighborhood concerns and serves broad public needs.

**6. I've heard the Town is building a Recreation Center on the Krums Corners property. Is that true?**

No, the Town is currently only attempting to purchase a piece of property that would be intended for recreational use.

TCR created concept plans for a piece of land in the Village (currently owned by the Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services) when TCR thought they would be able to develop it. That project fell through in 2021.

The Town has not adopted the TCR development plan for the Krums Corners property. Additionally, the Town has no plans, informal or formal, to build a recreation center on the Krums Corners property.

The Town Board and Trumansburg/Ulysses Youth Commission have discussed challenges and issues related to field access and purchasing the land was intended to provide field space for a variety of different sports. Thirty acres was recognized as a reasonable amount to provide field space and additional uses that could serve the public.

## Need for Parks and Recreation Fields

**7. Why can't we just use the Trumansburg Central school fields? They're beautiful!**

They are beautiful, and the Town is grateful to the Trumansburg Central School District (TCSD) for sharing their space with us. The issue, however, is that demand significantly exceeds availability. Additionally, approximately 1/3 of the students who live in Ulysses live in the Ithaca City School District.

On any given weeknight in the spring and fall, the TCSD fields are full of youth playing a variety of sports, using less space than they need and sharing space to the best of their ability.

Once the Town took over managing the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Department in 2019 and recreational demands and registrations increased post-COVID pandemic, it became very clear to the Town that there was a shortage of space. Priority is correctly given to district-sponsored activities and then the Town's Recreation Director competes for remaining space

with other community-based recreation programs to reserve fields and indoor space. TCSD prioritizes youth programming over adult programming in the registration. Scarcity of space results in different programs not having the space or times they need or sharing space in order to get practice time.

Additional recreational space is not meant to replace the TCSD facilities, but rather complement them.

## **8. Show me the numbers: where is all of this “demand” coming from?**

In 2019, the Town took over administration of recreation for both the Village of Trumansburg and the Town of Ulysses. For many decades, the Village operated a successful, but significantly smaller program.

The Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program, run by the Town of Ulysses, provides high-quality recreational opportunities for both youth and adults. It is overseen and guided by the Trumansburg/Ulysses Youth Commission that is comprised of representatives of the Village, Town, and TCSD and is supported by the Tompkins County Youth Services.

The intended purpose of the Department was not to replace successful volunteer organizations current operating but expand opportunities for youth and adults in our rural community. Programs provided by the Town are intended to support and complement existing programs being offered, to collectively expand the range of opportunities within our community.

After being restricted in its ability to provide programming in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, participation in programming has steadily increased each year.

In 2021, 376 people participated in programming by the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program.

In 2022, 541 people participated in programming by the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program.

As of October 1, 2023, before enrollment opens for the Town’s popular basketball program, 628 people have participated in programming by the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program for 2023. This reflects 1,703 total registrations, including 320 adult recreation registrations, 51 registrations in Driver’s Education, and 1,332 youth recreation registrations.

Currently all programming of the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program is based at the TCSD campus, even adult programs that could be easily sent to other facilities if available. TCSD has been a generous partner in supporting community recreation as a whole, but the demand for space exceeds availability.

District activities are given priority over Town-run activities, so youth and non-school programs are not allowed to operate on the campus until after 5 pm. Fields must be rested, and other needs of TCSD (such as events and construction) further limit the use of facilities. This can often lead to practices going well into the evening on school nights. If the Town owned its own facilities, programming could be offered earlier in the day, providing greater flexibility to the public and reducing excessive stress on the TCSD fields.

Additionally, Ulysses has a robust homeschooling community who do not have access to any publicly owned spaces during the day. Town-owned recreation spaces could be utilized by adults, homeschooled youth, and children younger than school-age during the periods the TCSD campus is closed to the general public (i.e., while school is in session).

During the school day, there is not a free playground for children to use in the Town, beyond the wonderful Little House on Main Street in the Village of Trumansburg. The TCSD playground is closed to the public during school hours and the playground at Taughannock State Park often requires paid admission.

### **9. What programs does the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program offer?**

Since 2020, programs for youth that have been offered at different times include: summer camp, baseball (t-ball, coach-pitch, hybrid, kid pitch), tennis, cross country, track, volleyball clinic, soccer clinics, softball clinic, basketball, and adult-kid pickle ball.

There has been requests from the public to expanding services to include other programs and activities, including yoga, martial arts, and basketball clinics and non-sports programming, but space and access limitations make growing further to meet demand effectively impossible.

### **10. What about programs for adults? What happened to programming through the Trumansburg Community Education Program?**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trumansburg Central School District offered adult recreation opportunities through the Trumansburg Community Education Program. These activities were stopped in March 2020 and adults were not allowed to use the facilities in 2021 or spring 2022.

In the fall of 2022, TCSD worked the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program to restart adult recreation at the school. The programming historically offered by the Trumansburg Community Education Program is now being managed by the Town.

Programs for adults currently include yoga, basketball, indoor soccer, outdoor soccer, competitive volleyball, and recreational volleyball. Pickleball has also been offered. Due to competition for space, outdoor adult opportunities can currently only happen in the summer when the school is closed.

If you're interested in registering for programming, you can sign up [here](#). If you are interested in a program that is not being offered currently, please send your ideas to [ulyssesrecreation@gmail.com](mailto:ulyssesrecreation@gmail.com).

**11. What about private organizations using the school grounds? Why should the public have to pay for private organizations? Shouldn't private groups just have to buy and pay for their own facilities if there isn't enough space at the school?**

Athletic opportunities are broadly recognized as important for youth and adults for physical and mental health [reasons](#). Nation-wide, less than 25% of youth under 18 are getting the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Regular physical activity is linked to significant health benefits for the individual and contribute to an overall healthier population.

TCSD provides school-sponsored sports activities starting in 7<sup>th</sup> grade using paid employees to coach and manage teams. TCSD provides physical education classes for all grades, but does not provide sports education in a team format for youth between pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Providing youth sports recreation and teams for pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade are largely outsourced to private organizations and the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Program.

Nearly all pre-K through 6<sup>th</sup> grades sports are provided by either the Trumansburg/Ulysses Recreation Department or local volunteer organizations. These volunteers are members of our community and are committed to providing sports education to youth and adults outside of what the TCSD can offer. Some coaches may make a small stipend or receive free registration for their own child in exchange for their time. These are very well-established programs that have been successfully and affordably operating in Ulysses for decades.

These programs are run on shoe-string budgets to keep costs as affordable as possible for youth and adults to participate and offer scholarships for children who would otherwise be unable to participate. These programs serve as the direct feeders to our modified (middle school), junior varsity and varsity sports teams and save the taxpayers money by privately shouldering the costs of providing youth recreation services to youth in pre-k through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

One of the important reasons TCR formed in 2016 was to address the insufficiency of field space and because the individual sports organizations could not reasonably afford to independently fundraise, purchase, develop and manage their own spaces. TCR brought all of these organizations together to begin thinking collectively about how these volunteer groups could work together to expand recreational opportunities in connection with TCSD, the Village, and the Town.

Below are some of the programming that are currently operating in the community. This is a non-exhaustive list, but reflective of significant participation. Other active organizations include, but are not limited to, Little Blue Raiders Cheerleaders, Girls on the Run, and Soccer Shots.

## ***Baseball***

In Spring/Summer 2023, Trumansburg Travel Baseball, (a 501 c(3) organization, formed in c. 2000), had 57 players on 6 travel teams. Youth in grades 2nd through 12th participated. This was run by 18 adult coaches and volunteers.

In Fall 2023, Trumansburg Travel Baseball provided playing opportunities for 17 players through a Fall Ball program. This was run by 2 adult coaches and volunteers.

## ***Football***

In Fall 2023, the Little Blue Raiders Football program, (a 501 c(3) organization, reformed in 2013) had 66 players on three youth teams. Youth in pre-k through 6<sup>th</sup> grader participated. This was run by 10 adult coaches and volunteers.

## ***Soccer***

In Spring 2023, Taughannock Soccer Club (a 501 c(3) organization, formed in 2003), provided soccer teams and recreational opportunities for 178 payers (ages 4-19), resulting in 8 travel teams and 1 recreation program. This was run by 20 adult coaches and volunteers, with 11 high school volunteers.

In Summer 2023, more than 70 participants (elementary through adults) participated in recreational soccer programming, run by volunteers.

In Fall 2023, there are 112 players (ages 4-13) participating in 5 travel teams and 1 recreation program. This is being run by 13 adult coaches and volunteers, with 10+ high school volunteers.

## **12. What kinds of information has Trumansburg Community Recreation (TCR) put together to access community needs?**

TCR has compiled [needs assessment](#) data, worked with Cornell University's Design Connect in 2019 on a [needs assessment](#), and currently has an open [Community Survey](#) that has been running for several months. A link to the survey was shared in the Town's newsletter on March 31, 2023 and has been circulated by TCR in various ways. The public is encouraged to participate.

## Krums Corner Property

### **13. Why not just buy land adjacent to the Village?**

Like anyone looking for land, the Town is limited to being able to buy what a property owner is willing to sell.

Additionally, the Town is not allowed to pay whatever the property owner wants for the land; an acceptable maximum price is set by a third-party appraiser.

Land adjacent to the Village is simply not available at a reasonable price point for the Town to purchase. Trumansburg Community Recreation tried to work with Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Alliance to develop the former Aubles property in the northwest portion of the Village into recreational facilities, but that plan fell through c. 2021. Trumansburg Community Recreation also unsuccessfully tried to buy part of the former Duddleston Farm, currently GrassRoots' Across the Way property, in 2017. As of October 1, 2023, approximately 15 acres currently on the market on Seneca Road are listed for approximately \$37,000 per acre, is well beyond what the Town is legally allowed to spend per acre.

### **14. Has the Town actively considered other pieces of land?**

Yes.

In January 2023, the Town Board directed Town Supervisor Katelin Olson and Town Board Member Elizabeth Weatherby to work with TCR volunteers on a potential land acquisition.

The Town Board submitted a purchase offer for a piece of land at the intersection of Perry City and Route 96 in March 2023. The offer was not accepted and the land was subsequently sold to someone else. The Town Board agreed that further exploration was warranted.

Supervisor Olson and Town Board Member Weatherby personally reached out to multiple large-scale property owners in Ulysses to see if anyone was willing to sell land for a recreational purpose. Additionally, TCR volunteers continued to reach to large landowners to see if they would be interested in selling for that purpose.

Land is very, very hot in Ulysses, and there is very little available that people are willing to sell, particularly for less than what would likely be paid on the open, competitive market.



## **15. How was the Krums Corners' land identified?**

After the Town was unsuccessful in purchasing the advertised land on Perry City and Route 96, Town Supervisor Katelin Olson and Town Board Member Elizabeth Weatherby continued to look for land with TCR with the support of the Town Board.

Numerous large landowners adjacent to the Village and throughout the Town were approached directly to see if they were interested in selling 20-30 acres of their land at a fair market value. The Town and TCR representatives reached out through community networks to see if any large farm landowners were interested in selling. The Town did not want to purchase wooded lands and clear them to develop fields.

The Washburn's were approached as part of this broad community outreach. They considered the idea and expressed interest to Town Supervisor Olson and Town Board Member Weatherby about selling a portion of their land for a public good. The first of several tours were conducted with for Town Board members and TCR board members.

As the Washburns have publicly shared, as they have shared in public statements, that they were already planning on putting some of their land on the market in 2023. Like many farming families, making ends meet in the Town of Ulysses is increasingly expensive. In order to stay in this community, this multi-generational farming family needed to sell land. They were willing to accept \$7,000/acre (a price determined by an independent third party without a financial stake in the outcome), likely less than they would get if they listed the property, because they [supported](#) the use of the land for recreational purposes.

## **16. How does zoning impact the use of the land?**

As stated in the zoning code, Regional Parks and preserves, as well as playgrounds and golf courses, are allowed by special permit under the current zoning for the Agricultural/Rural Zone. Zoning is land use control and in New York, zoning is adopted by the local municipality. (Some communities in our area, such as Covert and Enfield, do not have any zoning.)

Zoning is adopted and amended by the Town Board as a reflection of a community vision for the Town.

The Krums Corners property is currently zoned Agricultura/Rural by the Town of Ulysses. The zoning code is available [here](#).

The results of the special election will be the clearest reflection of whether the voters of Ulysses support the proposed land being used as a recreational space.

The voters will have the opportunity to decide on the land purchase on December 6th. If the voters support the purchase of this land purchase for recreational use, then the Town can make

any zoning changes---if ever necessary---to reflect the will of the voters as it pertains to this specific property.

**17. The land falls in the Town’s Agricultural Priority Area. How is this proposed land use not in conflict with current zoning?**

Per the Town of Ulysses Comprehensive Plan: “Land uses [in the Agricultural Priority Area] include but are not limited to: farming operations; parks, natural areas, and outdoor recreation; agricultural businesses; and low density and cluster residential as appropriate...”  
(Comprehensive Plan, page 38, with additional information available pages 41-42.)

This helps explain why regional parks, preserves, playgrounds, and golf courses are expressly allowed under the current zoning and why the Town Board did not perceive there to be a conflict with a future recreational use of the proposed acquisition with the current zoning.

**18. Shouldn’t the land be accessible by pedestrians?**

The entire population of the Town of Ulysses is just shy of 5,000 people, with approximately 1,800 residents living in the Village. The majority of Town residents (approximately 64%) live outside of the Village, so currently the majority of Ulysses residents are not simply walking to facilities located within the Village. Most of the population of the Town of Ulysses cannot walk to the Village safely. (See the school parking lots on weeknight evenings or the Farmer’s Market parking lot on Wednesdays for examples of this situation.)

Most parents and caregivers are currently driving their children to practices and games. Many adults are leaving Town to play sports on City of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca, and Town of Lansing fields.

The proposed land on Krums Corners is more centrally located to the population distribution of the Town as a whole. It is adjacent to Spruce Row, an important business with hundreds of seasonal campsites, as well as 1.1 miles from Route 89.

In addition to the Village, Ulysses has clusters of denser neighborhoods spread throughout the Town, particularly along the Lake Shore zone south of Taughannock State Park, Jacksonville, Waterburg, near Dubois Corner and Hinging Post Road, and around Van Dorn Corners Road.

Additionally, it is exactly ½ mile from the Black Diamond Trail. If purchased, the Town would work with Tompkins County to improve pedestrian and bike access between the Black Diamond Trail and the future park. Tompkins County has an excellent history of supporting pedestrian and bike safety improvements.

The Town also has an excellent history of working with TCAT on bus services. Due to the direct advocacy of the Town’s Recreation Director, TCAT began offering a bus route to Taughannock Falls State Park from the Village in 2022. While bus service is not currently available to Krums

Corners, that does not mean additional transportation services could not evolve with needs and uses.

### **19. Is it a conflict of interest for a Town employee to sell land to the Town?**

There is no legal conflict of interest with a Town employee selling land to the town. This has been vetted by the Town's attorney. The Town abided by all applicable laws with the negotiation of the land, the public notification process, and the public referendum process.

There is a simple test regarding whether a legal conflict of interest exists:

*#1 – Does the person selling the property also in a position to be deciding on the purchase of the property? (i.e., Is the seller also the buyer?)*

The answer is no. Mr. Washburn serves as the Town's Code Enforcement Officer. In his position with the Town, he does not get to decide whether the Town Board purchases property. A Town Board member could not sell land to the Town. Mr. Washburn is the seller, but not also the buyer.

*#2 – Will the acquisition of the property result in Mr. Washburn making more money at his Town job?*

Again, the answer is no. The Code Enforcement position is a salaried position, which means that position is paid a flat wage. Mr. Washburn's salary at the Town will not be impacted or changed as a result of a Town purchase of the property.

Additionally, the price of the land was not established by either the Washburns or the Town. It was established by Landmark Appraisals, an independent, unbiased third-party appraisal company that previously established the value of the land when the Town purchased the Salo Habitat in 2018. Hiring an independent third party is required to insure a fair, unbiased price.

### **20. Why was the land not listed first?**

Town Board members and members of TCR approached many property owners about whether they would be interested in selling land to the Town at a fair marked appraised value. (Currently at \$7,000/acre for undeveloped farmland.)

The Washburns were included in the landowners approached, and, as they have shared, already had thoughts of selling a portion of their land. In order to provide the community a resource, rather than take the top dollar they could get on the open market, the Washburns decided to offer the Town the first opportunity to purchase their property. They were willing to accept \$7,000/acre, likely less than they would get if they listed the property, because they [supported](#) the use of the land for recreational purposes.

## **21. How was the price of the land determined?**

The price of the land was determined by a third-party appraiser based on comparable land sales in the Town of Ulysses. You can read the appraisal report [here](#). The Town is *always* required not to spend more for a property than what is determined by an independent appraisal in order to ensure that the public is getting a fair, unbiased deal. This is a requirement of our government, and not linked to the funds we'd use to purchase the land. The same requirements were applied to New York State's acquisition of Camp Barton.

## **22. How was a fair market value for the land determined?**

The Town had an independent appraisal conducted on the value of the land on Krums Corners by Landmark Appraisals, which determined that the value of vacant farmland in the Town of Ulysses is \$7,000 per acre.

Landmark Appraisals, an independent, unbiased third-party appraisal company, previously established the value of the land when the Town purchased the Salo Habitat in 2018.

## **23. How has the assessed price of property changed in Ulysses over time?**

Property assessment is handled for Ulysses by the Tompkins County Department of Assessment.

Any property owner in Ulysses can attest that the assessed value of homes in Ulysses has increased significantly in the last decade.

In 2015, the average home in Ulysses was assessed for \$165,000, and in 2023 that same average home is assessed for \$238,000.

This reflects an increase in the average home price assessment of \$73,000 or 44%.

In comparison, in 2015 the assessed value of vacant farmland per acre in Ulysses was \$4,000 and has increased 0% according to the Tompkins County Department of Assessment.

Very little in the United States has not increased in value since 2015. According to the US Department of Labor, inflation rates between 2015 and 2023 increased 31.699%, making nearly everything more expensive

## **24. What is the difference between an assessment and an appraisal?**

Both assessments and appraisals are useful real estate tools, and frequently are different from one another.

A property assessment is calculated by the Tompkins County Tax Assessor's office and is the property they think reflects value. According to Tompkins County Assessor Jay Franklin (per the Department email sent to the public on 10/20/23), one responsibility of his office is "to maintain an equitable assessment roll by ensuring all properties [in a municipality] are assessed at a uniform ratio of market value."

In comparison, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (a federal government entity), describes the purpose of an appraisal is to "give you useful information about the property. It describes what makes it valuable and may show how it compares to other properties in the neighborhood."

Multiple reasons exist for why the neither the Town of Ulysses nor New York State are required to use the assessed value of a property instead of the appraised value to determine a purchase price. One is because appraised values can be more precise and reflective of market conditions in a particular part of a municipality instead of the municipality as a single entity. (i.e., One neighborhood may be more desirable--and therefore have a higher appraised value--than another to purchase or develop property.)

A second important reason is because tax assessors are employed by the government. Indeed, the Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution declares "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." (The Town is not taking land by eminent domain, but the same general concept applies that the government should pay a fair price for land.)

If a government is purchasing land, it makes sense to have someone other than a government employee determines the value. Third party appraisals allow both the government buyer and the private property owner to understand that they are receiving an unbiased evaluation of the fair market value of a property.

## **25. Is it common for assessments and appraisals to be different?**

It is common for property appraisals and assessments to be different in areas where properties are hard to find to purchase and where demand exceeds availability. (Talk to any realtor operating in Ulysses if you want more information on that.)

For instance, in 2022 Camp Barton was assessed by the tax assessor for \$3.65 million, yet appraised by a third-party appraiser in 2022 for \$5.05 million. This higher number was what New York State is paying for the property. (The Town of Covert has the same appraiser as the Town of Ulysses.) This difference in valuation reflected a 38% increase in perceived value between the assessed value and the appraised value.

Ultimately, property owners have the right to sell their property for what the market will bear, while the Town of Ulysses and New York State are bound to not spend more than the value determined by an independent third party. This is to make sure that the public is getting a fair

deal for any purchase and that the seller has confidence that the government is not artificially undervaluing their land.

**26. What about the water table? I've heard there are water issues in that area of Town.**

The Town is aware that residents in vicinity of Kraft Road and Krums Corners have water quality issues.

Recreational fields in our area, including those at TCSD, Cass Park in Ithaca, the Newfield Community Park, and other recreational spaces do not irrigate their fields. Field creation does require water, but temporary water sources (i.e., portable tanks) could be used to help establish the fields, and Mother Nature could be used to water them like other properties. This would be much more affordable for the Town than digging permanent wells.

The Town of Ulysses also has a very skilled and competent Town Planner and a very capable Planning Board. The Planning Board routinely considers new development projects and works to make sure that development is compatible with environmental regulations, local laws, and neighborhood concerns and issues.

The Town is also working to address water quality questions and concerns. More information about our Water Source Protection Plan Committee and their activities are available [here](#).

**27. Would the Town consider purchasing a different piece of land?**

The Town had an appraisal done on vacant farmland in Ulysses and the price determined was \$7,000 per acre. The Town is not allowed to spend more than the appraised price.

However, the Town has a limited window through the end of 2024 to commit the American Recovery Plan Act funds and real property transactions, subject to permissive referendums, take many months.

The Town is currently under contract for the land on Krums Corners and the special election on December 6<sup>th</sup> will determine whether that deal is finalized. The voters asked to be able to vote on that decision, and whether that contract will be finalized will be determined by the voters.

If the voters reject the land purchase, the Town Board would have to make a determination whether to explore a different land acquisition plan with the limited time remaining or pivot/develop a different plan for the ARPA funds.

The Town must plan that it would take a minimum of 9 months (as demonstrated by the current situation) to negotiate and enter into a new contract with a different property owner and go through a potential special election triggered by a permissive referendum process. This compressed time line may make it challenging and the Town Board is unwilling to enter into

any contract or undertake additional expenses on any new property until the voters have the right to vote on the current proposal.

If you are aware of a piece of property between 20-30 acres that an owner is willing to sell for this price, please email [clerk@townofulyssesny.gov](mailto:clerk@townofulyssesny.gov).

**28. Would the Town consider using these other funds for different land?**

Possibility, but it would be challenging because of the deadline to allocate the funds. The process from start to finish (ending on December 6th with the special election) on the land deal currently under consideration by the voters was about 9 months. To date, no property owners have contacted the Town with an interest in selling between 20-30 acres to the Town at a price that would be determined by an independent appraisal. All other land deals would also be subject to a permissive referendum as well, so the Town would have to plan that any additional purchase could/would trigger another special election.

**29. I have 20-30 acres of land in the Town of Ulysses that I may be interested in selling for recreational purposes. Who should I contact?**

Please direct any letters of interest to the Town Board via the Town Clerk ([clerk@townofulyssesny.gov](mailto:clerk@townofulyssesny.gov)).

## Funding and Taxes

**30. Where is the money coming from to pay for the land purchase?**

The Town of Ulysses, like every other municipal government in the United States, received funds through the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA). Ulysses' portion of the money is related to the population of the Town outside of the Village of Trumansburg. (The Village received its own APRA funds.)

The Town received \$321,415 and is proposing to use \$210,000 of the ARPA funds to purchase 30 acres on Krums Corners. Regular closing costs and fees, estimated to be approximately \$8,500, will be paid for out of dedicated reserves set aside for the purpose of recreational property. The purchase of the land has no impact on the 2024 tax levy in the adopted 2024 budget available [here](#).

Using ARPA funds to invest in new or existing recreational facilities in an approved use. According to the [“Coronavirus State and Local Discal Recovery Funds 2021 Interim Final Rule: Frequently Asked Questions,”](#) (as of August 2023):

“For example, investments in parks, public plazas, and other public outdoor recreation spaces may be responsive to the needs of disproportionately impacted communities by promoting

healthier living environments and outdoor recreation and socialization to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.”

More information about how children can benefit from the use of ARPA funds can be found [here](#).

### **31. What other uses for the American Recovery Plan Act funds has the Town Board identified?**

The Town Board has already committed some of Ulysses’ share of APRA funds to various projects, including: installing an accessible door at Town Hall; painting the exterior of Town Hall; buying radio meter replacements for Water District 3; tank maintenance at the Van Dorn tank; and for I.T./Cyber modernization at Town Hall.

One of the major projects proposed in 2022 for the use of the funds was the redevelopment of the back parking lot at Town Hall. Since that discussion, the Town has been encouraged by the Town’s Conservation and Sustainability Advisory Committee that any redevelopment should be done using permeable pavement. Andrew Hillman, who has expertise in this field and who serves on the Conservation and Sustainability Advisory Committee, made an excellent presentation at the August 8, 2023 Town Board meeting on the benefits of permeable pavement. (This presentation can be viewed [here](#); the presentation starts approximately 70 minutes into the meeting.) These material changes, including upgrading the exterior lighting and electricity, would likely exceed (possibly substantially) the \$95,000 originally estimated in September 2022.

### **32. Have other municipalities utilized their American Recovery Plan Act funds for recreational facilities?**

Yes, ARPA funds have been utilized by other municipalities to invest in new or existing recreational facilities.

Livingston County, New York distributed a portion of its ARPA funds to the 17 municipalities specifically to “support the creation of or improvements to parks, trails or other forms of outdoor recreation, and/or tourism efforts”:

- The Town of Springwater utilized the funds to install new bleachers, update seating areas and improve the community’s baseball facilities at the town park ([News Flash • Livingston County, NY • CivicEngage](#))
- The Town of West Sparta developed land into a park, including a new community playground ([News Flash • Livingston County, NY • CivicEngage](#))
- The Town of York updated its community playground ([News Flash • Livingston County, NY • CivicEngage](#))

The Town of Enfield recently completed the paving of their basketball court at the Enfield Community Center with the use of ARPA funds and Tompkins County grant funds ([Resolution-](#)



[to-Support-Parks-and-Trails-Grant-Application.pdf \(townofenfield.org\)](#); Supervisor Stephanie Redmond Facebook post 11/2/23).

### **33. I'm concerned about taxes. How can we afford to buy this land?**

The Town Board agrees that buying and developing recreational land should not be a significant burden to the tax payer, while also recognizing that recreational opportunities are highly beneficial to the general public.

The Town of Ulysses already has the [lowest tax rate](#) of any municipality in Tompkins County, and the Town Board remains committed to providing high quality services at an affordable price point. In 2024, we are proposing to further reduce the rate property owners pay in the [Tentative 2024 Budget](#).

The land would be purchased with \$210,000 of the Town's allocation of ARPA funding and the regular closing costs and fees of a land transaction (estimated at \$8,500) would be paid for out of dedicated reserves that were set aside for recreation development over the last decade. As such, the 2024 budget does not include costs associated with the purchase of this property.

### **34. Ok, but what about development costs? Parks cost a lot to build.**

Yes, park development can be very expensive. Many parks have "Friends of" groups to help them fundraise, and we are fortunate that TCR (an established 501 c(3) organization) is willing to serve this important role.

If the people of the Town vote in favor of buying the land, the Town would develop a Memorandum of Understanding with TCR for them to spearhead the fundraising necessary to bring the development to fruition. (Towns are not allowed to privately fundraise.) TCR would be eligible to raise funds through private donations for the park, while helping the Town write grants only available to governments for money that is routinely available through New York State and Tompkins County for investments in publicly owned parks.

This process of community-supported public parks has been commonly done throughout our area. Myers Park in Lansing, the Newfield Community Park in Newfield, and Cass Park in Ithaca have benefited from the time and talent of volunteers to make development possible without having any significant impact on their taxes.

### **35. Are there any time limits to using the federal funds? Why can't we wait to develop a Recreation Plan first?**

The federal funds must be allocated to a specific project by the end of 2024. Purchasing land to expand recreational facilities is an approved use of the funds, as providing more outdoor space to the public was recognized as valuable and important during the COVID pandemic.

The current Town Board recognizes that the most recent [Comprehensive Plan](#), adopted in 2009, specifies an objective of “Maintain and expand unique park and recreation facilities for the continued use and enjoyment of residents and visitors to the Town.”

The Comprehensive Plan also called for the creation of a Recreation Master Plan. However, no efforts appear to have been made to develop a recreational plan after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 2009. The current Town Board does not know why that effort was not undertaken by previous Town leadership, despite the public’s clear support of expanding park and recreational facilities.

The current Town Board was persuaded by the history of different Town Boards looking for land for recreation, ongoing challenges experienced by our current Recreation Director, frustrations shared by volunteer coaches and recreational participants, information presented by Trumansburg Community Recreation, opinions by members of the public that there is a clear need for more recreational space, and the 2009 Comprehensive objective.

The Town Board voted in favor of the land acquisition because they believed the land selected could be appropriately developed to serve the public in a sustainable, appropriate way using one-time funds.

Developing recreation plans, fundraising, and securing grants after land is purchased is not unusual. The Town of Lansing adopted their first Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan in 2022, decades after they purchased and managed their parks.

### **36. What happens if the land cannot be developed due to insufficient/unsuccessful fundraising?**

The Town Board would provide time for the project to go through a community planning process and proceed with fundraising and grant writing. This process would likely take several years to get rolling, and investment would happen as funding was available.

However, if best efforts could not generate sufficient funds, the Town Board would have the ability to sell the property on the open market. While the Town is limited in its ability in how much it can spend for property, it is not limited in how much it can sell it for. Given the trajectory of property values in Ulysses over the last couple of decades, the Town Board is confident the public’s investment would be recouped above and beyond the investment if development funds cannot be adequately raised within a reasonable amount of time.

## Special Election

### **37. Why is this going to a public vote?**

Residents of Ulysses submitted a petition on September 7, 2023 opposing the purchase of the land. On September 26, the Town Board accepted the petition and moved forward to begin scheduling a special election. The full petition can be accessed [here](#).

### **38. When/where will the special election be held?**

New York State election laws are very specific and the Town is working with the Tompkins County Board of Elections to schedule the special election.

The special election will be held on **Wednesday, December 6** from **11am-8pm** at one of two polling places:

- Trumansburg Village Hall, 56 E. Main Street, Trumansburg, NY 14886
- Racker, 3226 Wilkins Road, Ithaca, NY 14850

The public may vote at either polling place, whichever is more convenient.

### **39. Who may vote in the special election?**

The special election is open to residents of the Town of Ulysses over the age of 18 who have lived in the Town at least 30 days prior to the election. Tax payers with residency in other locations are not eligible to vote. (This is per New York State voter and election requirements.)

Personal registration will be required for this special election, such that you must be a registered voter prior to the special election.

Anyone already registered with the Tompkins County Board of Elections is all set to vote on December 6. You can check your registration status with Tompkins County [here](#).

For those who are not registered, the Town will be holding dates when anyone eligible who is not already registered with Tompkins County Board of Elections can register for the Town Election:

- November 18 at Town Hall, 10 Elm Street, Trumansburg, NY 14886, between noon and 4 p.m.
- November 21 at Town Hall, 10 Elm Street, Trumansburg, NY 14886, between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

### **40. How do I register for an absentee ballot?**

Permanent absentee voters will receive a ballot directly from the Town via the U.S. Mail to the mailing address provided by Tompkins County Board of Elections.

For non-permanent absentee voters, absentee ballot applications are available for pick up at the Town Clerk's office starting Monday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. They will also be available on the Town's website.

The last day to request an absentee ballot to be mailed to the voter is November 29 at 5pm.

The last day to request an absentee ballot to be provided in person to the voter or their agent is December 5 at 5pm.

The deadline for the Town Clerk to receive mailed or in-person absentee ballot is December 6 at 5pm.

Please call (607-387-5767) or email the Town Clerk ([clerk@townofulyssesny.gov](mailto:clerk@townofulyssesny.gov)) with any questions. The Clerk's office is generally open Monday – Friday, 10am-3pm.

## Anticipated Planning Process

### **40. If the voters approve the purchase, how would the planning process work?**

The Town of Ulysses is equally committed to development at a managed, sustainable pace that allows community desires and concerns to be addressed.

The process for determining how the land would be developed would occur through a community engagement process. The Town has a professional planner on staff, and Ulysses is currently undertaking a comprehensive plan update.

The community would have a significant opportunity for participate in how the property was designed and developed in addition to known recreational field needs. Many options have been suggested by community members, including walking trails, a pavilion, a community playground, a dog park, cross-country trails, and/or a community garden. Other ideas would undoubtedly emerge during the community engagement process.

The Town Board would also work with our experienced Town Planner and the Ulysses Planning Board to make sure that any proposed development is addressing storm water, lighting, drinking water, grading, and many other environmental and site plan issues. The Planning Board is comprised of skilled professionals who are familiar with helping development projects meet the needs of our community and balancing environmental priorities with new development.

### **41. Do other Towns ever buy land first and then successfully work with their communities to develop them in an economically and sustainable way?**

Yes, the Town of Newfield purchased farm land in 2006 to develop the future Newfield Community Park when they had the opportunity to do so, but understood---as we understand in Ulysses---that they would not immediately have the money to proceed with development. Newfield voters approved the purchase at a special election.

In 2016 a group of volunteers in Newfield organized to fundraise for their park and worked with the Town of Newfield to secure a financial allocation by the New York State Legislature for a 50/50 matching grant. Using private funds raised and volunteer time, Newfield, as a rural community, has come together to provide Town-owned fields and reduce overuse on the Newfield Central School District facilities. It has been a community-wide effort and they will be able to do this without passing the development cost burden on to the tax payer. You can learn all about this initiative [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

Parks in Dryden, Ithaca, Lansing and beyond have also used significant volunteer labor and private donations to make their parks successful and functional.

*Please note: This is recognized as a living document, which will be updated/amended with additional information as available.*

*Do you have a question not answered? Additional questions can be submitted to [clerk@townofulyssesny.gov](mailto:clerk@townofulyssesny.gov) for consideration of inclusion in a future FAQ draft.*