



July 16, 2024

Hon. Charlotte Gordon, Mayor & Second Ward Councilperson
Hon. Lyvette Barnes-Mosley, Vice-President & Fourth Ward Councilperson
Hon. Andy Cole, Third Ward Councilperson
Hon. Sean Dunne, First Ward Councilperson
Hon. Dennis Packard, Sixth Ward Councilperson
Hon. Joey Sandlin, Fifth Ward Councilperson
Sam Sutherland, City Manager
Diana Ratliff, City Clerk
John Haas, City Solicitor

City of Portsmouth, Ohio
500 Chillicothe Street
Portsmouth, OH 45662

Open Letter of Appreciation to the City of Portsmouth regarding Spartan Stadium & Branch Rickey Park transfer

Following the July 15 Portsmouth City Council vote to transfer Spartan Stadium and surrounding sports fields to Shawnee State University, I write to express my deep appreciation to the City of Portsmouth, Ohio.

Over the past year, Shawnee State University and the City of Portsmouth have examined future use of 23 acres to the east of Shawnee State's campus that includes Spartan Stadium, Branch Rickey Park, and adjacent land for conversion into a Shawnee State University athletics complex. The complex will serve as a future home for SSU varsity team sports, intramural programs, student recreation, as well as for community youth leagues, tournaments, and camps. The initial concept envisions new or upgraded fields for baseball, softball, soccer, and track and field that can be used year-round, day and night.

I appreciate City Council's due diligence in considering this property transfer. Members asked hard questions about the impact the transfer would have on the City's future land needs and imparted a responsibility that the university make investments to improve the property for the betterment of the City. We take that responsibility seriously.

We are all sentimental about the existing stadiums. The best way to honor their history is to put them into current use. We will work with the SSU Center for Public History to maintain historically significant elements and develop opportunities for features to be displayed for users and tourists. We will also modernize structures and spaces so that they can be looked upon by the City of Portsmouth with the same sense of pride in 2030 that they had in 1930.

This project will be transformational for both Shawnee State University and the City of Portsmouth. Together with the generational investments underway at the Portsmouth riverfront, the City and its residents will enjoy a fundamentally improved downtown in the years to come.

Dialogue between the university and the City has been positive, cooperative, and frankly, very encouraging. I am particularly grateful for the leadership of Mayor Charlotte Gordon, who made gracious public statements in favor of the transfer prior to votes on the legislation. I share Mayor Gordon's enthusiasm for the new softball stadium as the site's first major project, as it will highlight women's sports as an area of strength for our region.

Office of the President

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The overarching objective of this project is to develop world-class facilities that will make Portsmouth an attractive destination to keep talented southern Ohioans in southern Ohio. Thank you sincerely to Portsmouth City Council, city officials and staff, and to the citizens of Portsmouth, who examined the opportunities that this property presents and chose boldly to move us forward together.

Respectfully yours,



Eric Andrew Braun, JD, EdD
President