Governor David Paterson recently announced that the Town of Brookhaven was chosen to receive $25,000 for the Town's Shared Recreation Program Assessment. Last year, Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld advocated for sufficient funding in the town's 2009 Parks Department budget for the purpose of conducting a town-wide needs assessment of the town's athletic fields, including its 18 public school districts and eight incorporated villages. The project will involve an intensive inventory of current athletic team needs and services, in order to determine how town-wide needs may be satisfied and cost savings and revenues increased by an efficiently shared use of existing facilities between, most particularly, town and school districts.

Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld explained that, "All levels of government are feeling financial constraints. In particular, school districts throughout our town are attempting to be more responsive to homeowners' concerns about property taxes. However, due to the demand for expanding opportunities for their own school organized athletic teams and increasing costs of maintenance, a number of school districts have reduced 'community-based / non-school organized' use of their school's athletic fields." In order to compensate for this, Brookhaven Town has needed to pick up where schools have left off and, as a result, has created new athletic fields requiring added maintenance and upkeep on Town property by town taxpayers. The Councilman questioned if this is the most efficient way to expend taxpayers' limited resources. "Perhaps by working together," he said, "both our town and our school districts can conceive of better, more cost effective strategies regarding the active recreation needs for our children. I expect and hope this study will help us in this smart tax saving endeavor."

Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld advocated for funding this town-wide athletic field needs assessment study in the 2009 Town budget, of which $100,000 is available. At the April 26, 2009, Town Board meeting, the Town Council unanimously approved a contract for Nelson & Pope Engineers to conduct Phase One of the Needs Assessment Study. Shortly thereafter, while attending a NYS Department of State grant seminar, Fiore-Rosenfeld learned of an inter-municipal grant that, should the Town be a recipient, could help fund Phase One of this study. A grant application was submitted with the Three Village School District as co-sponsor, and the Town recently learned that it was granted $25,000, an amount that will cover the cost of Nelson & Pope's contract.

Phase One will bring the Town and the Three Village School District, as well as the other 18 school districts in our township, to work together on this local inter-municipal initiative to gathering the critical information required. The Needs Assessment Study will compile the data needed; i.e., the number of organized teams that actually exist (organized by: school, town, church, non-profit, adult, etc.) and what fields are currently or could be made available for use by these teams. This compilation of information would lay the groundwork for the Town to assess where new fields should be located and whether school districts and town government could possibly work together to efficiently manage, maintain, and coordinate the scheduling of their existing facilities.

"As communities on eastern Long Island continue to grow," Congressman Tim Bishop explained, "comprehensive planning and inter-municipal coordination will allow local governments to allocate scarce resources in a manner that enhances services and reduces costs."

Assemblyman Steve Englebright praised this initiative and called it "an expression of a local inter-municipal initiative between the Town of Brookhaven and the Three Village School District" and expressed his hope that other school districts may sign on as partners to this initiative in the near future. He further stated, "This study will allow both the town and school districts to better plan for future fields to meet the growing needs of their residents. It will shed new light on how the needs of athletic field users can be better met in ways that promote greater usage while reducing costs."