

OD Rifle, I had a similar experience a few years ago, I will give you a little background and then tell you what my team did. I apologize for how long this is, but I didn't want to leave anything out.

Four years ago before starting my Junior year of high school my school district made plans to shut down the Tumwater High school smallbore team as well as the other team in the same district. This was back in Washington State, and I competed against four other high schools within our league. We were told we were being shut down due to cuts as well, while it was in fact an effort by the district to make it appear that they were making cuts, as the only money we received from them at the time was a small salary for the coach and maybe a little for equipment, but I don't think so. In any case, we went about it in a very methodical way, and we were able to save the teams, however we had to become self-sufficient.

Let me talk about funding first. First of all, we offered the district something. You will no doubt have to give up something. The coach's said that they would choose not to be paid, it was only a small stipend besides. We told them that we would operate for free, and essentially we had been. Most of our equipment on the team today still comes from NRA grants, so that was our plan. From my experience, these grants can range anywhere from 3000-5000 dollars. You have already noted the success your team has had, and when you write grants it is imperative to write of your success; i.e. championships you have won, students who have gone off to compete for NCAA teams, ect. Now, having said all this I do not know what your major costs are. My high school team provided the minimum amount of equipment, scope, stand, basic jacket, and the best rifle available was an Anschutz 1903. Anyone who wanted something better was involved on the club team I was also a member of, involved on before, and we had been buying our own equipment over the years anyway. Transportation was provided with a combination of parents and students, so no district transportation was involved, only personal vehicles. However, the team does well with grant money and what we have accumulated over the years.

If your team can afford to give up a little, you may have a chance with the district. However, they may have other arguments and you need to be prepared. For us, the district proved to be very ignorant, as they thought we stored rifles on campus and that we were a liability because we did not use district transportation (their fault, not ours). So, definitely see if they have other reasons for cutting you. Next, see if you can get some legal representation. One of the high school coach's in our league was a practicing lawyer, and he gave us a professional edge. If you have any sort of contact like that who could work for you for free, take advantage of that. However, out of all I have said, the most important thing for you to do is to show up to school board meetings, I was showing up to ones over the summer. Our team and our rival who was also being cut showed up to every school board meeting. At the first one, our Coach's spoke, and the lawyer spoke. That goes without saying. However, you need to have the captain on your team speak as well. I got up and spoke to the school board, and passed out printed copies of a paper I

typed up summarizing our arguments against the school board for cutting us. I touched on our team's success, the benefits it gave to those who participated, and a polite rebuttal of the school boards arguments. The paper I typed up gave a nice summary of our argument, and passing it out gave me a professional edge. Little things like that make a difference. We had to continue to show up to meetings, and there were one or two where we were not able to speak. However, the fact that we showed up is what counted. You want to make sure the district knows that you are a force that is not going away anytime soon. I watched a young lady in the room that same day vouching for a sixth grade camp that was going to be cut be defeated by the mere fact that there were no other schools there to help represent. The board asked, believe me they notice things like that. When we walked in the room, my brother and I would wear our letteman jackets and we would walk in with our trophy's and place them on the back table. Presentation was key.

Best of luck to you on your team. Once again, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of making yourself a presence. Get on the school-boards agenda, show up to open meetings, contact the superintendent, etc. They need to know that you are not going away anytime soon. Make sure you show up with your team, parents, any alumni you might have, and other teams if you can get them. Touch on your team's success, and explain to them what the team means to you. I noticed that you mentioned how you liked the sport partially because it was not a contact sport, and many others including myself are in that same boat. Shooting has always been a great sport because the outcasts, shy, and athletically challenged youth can enjoy a great sport (I belong to the athletically challenged club), among other things. Mention the positive impact it has on the students on your team. I do sincerely hope it works out for you.

Zach