MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB Item
October 23, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director of Parks
Gene Giddens, Deputy Director of Parks for Operations

FROM: Kate Stookey, Supervisor, Park Information & Customer Service Office

RE: Staff Response to Public Testimony Received on Proposal for Implementation of Hourly Athletic Field Fees

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Recommended Planning Board Action:

Staff Recommendation: Approve Hourly Field Fee Schedule (attachment 1.2)

Purpose

The purpose of introducing an hourly athletic field fee is to:

1. Help offset the continually increasing costs of utilities, field maintenance and renovation for our heavily used fields,
2. Generate additional funds to improve the quality and playability of our fields,
3. Discourage over-permitting and non-use of fields by large organizations,
4. Provide more opportunities for new groups to gain weekend and other field time, and
5. Bring our athletic field fees more in line with other regional jurisdictions.

Public Testimony

Copies of the public testimony received on this item are attached for your review. In the staff response document (attachment 1.1), we did our best to address their concerns. We hope this document provides you with the information you need to make a decision on the fee proposal.

Outreach and Public Notification Process

Should this new fee schedule be approved, notices will be posted online and at both Permit Offices. A publication explaining the changes and new procedures will be produced and sent to all athletic field permit holders.

Attachment 1.1

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY	THOSE TESTIFYING	STAFF RESPONSE
Supports fee proposal	Donna Bartko, Community-Wide Recreation Advisory Board Gabe Albornoz, Montgomery County Recreation Dept. (MCRD) Denise Gorham, BCC Baseball Elizabeth Haberman for Ginny Gong, Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) Gerad McCowin, Gaithersburg Area Church Mens Softball League John Rice, Montgomery County Senior Sports Association Peter D'Orazio	Agree.
Offer discounted rates for special needs, therapeutic recreation and seniors groups	Donna Bartko, Community-Wide Recreation Advisory Board	Staff recommends against discounting rates for special groups due to the difficulty in determining which of the many different groups to include and how to qualify selected groups. MCRD already offers programs for these three groups and has been given a flat fee instead of the hourly rate.
Additional funds generated by increased fees should be put back into increased maintenance and field improvements.	Donna Bartko, Community-Wide Recreation Advisory Board David Modi, 45+ Men's Soccer League Amanda Anderson, WAWSL and Montgomery County Masters Over 40 Recreation	Agree. However, the rising costs of maintenance supplies and materials may mean that any additional funds generated will be needed just to maintain our fields at current levels.
Hourly fees should be waived for adopting organizations on fields they have adopted.	Denise Gorham, BCC Baseball	Agree.

Remove soccer overlays on softball fields.	Denise Gorham, BCC Baseball	Disagree. While this would protect the outfields of our diamond fields, it would mean significant loss of inventory of rectangular fields. Demand for rectangular fields is high and growing. While overlays should be viewed as a temporary solution, they cannot be removed until new rectangular fields are built or artificial turf becomes more widespread.
Hourly changeovers must be enforced.	Denise Gorham, BCC Baseball	Agree. The switch to hourly fees means more emphasis must be placed on leaving the field when time is up so other hourly users can enjoy their full allotted time. The permit office will be sure to emphasize this with users and it will be in writing. Staff will explore penalties for repeat violators.
Review priority status granted to MCRD, and consider giving priority to MC youth instead.	Denise Gorham, BCC Baseball	Most jurisdictions have a combined parks and recreation department, which means the recreation programs in these jurisdictions do not need to pay for the use of parks facilities. However, the revenue generated from those programs would directly or indirectly help support the upkeep of these facilities. In Montgomery County, because the recreation and parks agencies are separate, it was agreed to establish a flat fee which would both allow recreation programs to continue and offset parks' maintenance costs. Though youth have not been given priority over MCRD, lower fees were set for youth groups to encourage these programs.
Evaluate permitting procedures and provide better service.	Denise Gorham, BCC Baseball	Agree. Staff is already in the process of streamlining permitting procedures and hopes to transition to a better system in the Spring.

Monetary refunds should be allowed.	Gerad McCowin, Gaithersburg Area Church Mens Softball League	Agree. User groups will be given the option of either a monetary refund or a future use credit. Refunds for released fields would be issued at the beginning of the season; refunds for rainouts are for regional/recreational fields only and would not be issued until the end of the season.
Clearly explain how the new fee structure will be implemented.	Gerad McCowin, Gaithersburg Area Church Mens Softball League	**Applications will be due:** Dec. 1-Jan. 15 for Spring/Summer May 15 – June 15 for Fall/Winter **Deadlines to release unneeded fields for a refund will be:** March 15 for Spring/Summer August 15 for Fall /Winter **Full payment of fees will be due:** April 1 for Spring/Summer September 1 for Fall/Winter **Monetary refunds or future use credits** for rainouts (field time cancelled by staff) will be given at the end of the season and are for regional/recreational fields only. Users will have the choice of receiving a monetary refund or a credit towards the next season. Users must submit list of cancelation dates to permit office at the end of each season.
Fees should be uniform for all age groups regardless if the field is lit or unlit.	Larry Lombardi, Men's Senior Baseball League Roger Stanley, Men's Senior Baseball League Peter D'Orazio	Disagree. Lower fees for youth were set to encourage youth to get out and get active and support our participation in the No Child Left Inside initiative. The $15/hour additional fee for lit fields is to offset rising utility costs that are costing the department $25/hour or more. These costs cannot be borne

		by the current operating budget alone.
Explore alternative ways to cut costs of maintaining fields; give user groups the option to provide field maintenance for lower fees.	Larry Lombardi, Men's Senior Baseball League Roger Stanley, Men's Senior Baseball League	These types of agreements, called Adopt-A-Field agreements, already exist with multiple user groups. We invite MSBL to explore an Adopt-A-Field agreement with the department.
Make release dates more flexible.	John Rice – Montgomery County Senior Sports Association Amanda Anderson, WAWSL and Montgomery County Masters Over 40 Recreation	Agree. Staff has changed the release dates to March 15 for the spring/summer season and August 15 for the fall/winter season.
Consider a prorated refund for fields released during the season.	Amanda Anderson, WAWSL and Montgomery County Masters Over 40 Recreation	Staff is discussing this idea to determine how/if it could work.
Removing overlays would create a shortage of soccer opportunities.	Amanda Anderson, WAWSL and Montgomery County Masters Over 40 Recreation	Agree. While this would protect the outfields of our diamond fields, it would mean significant loss of inventory of rectangular fields. Demand for rectangular fields is high and growing. While overlays should be viewed as a temporary solution, they cannot be removed until new rectangular fields are built or artificial turf becomes more widespread.
Reduce the increase to make it a 10%-20% increase instead.	Anna Duff – Ponce De Leon Baseball League	Disagree. While we understand the concern of organized groups, the fees we are proposing are reasonable given the costs we are incurring to maintain these fields. It costs us more than $69/hour to maintain our fields, yet we are proposing to charge only $3/hour for local fields and $15-$35/hour for regional and recreational fields. It is important to note that the revenue generated by many groups through user fees is also considerable. If the average user were to pass on the increases directly to their participants, it would result in an increase of $10 or

		less.
Higher prices will not discourage people from acquiring permits they don't need.	Anna Duff – Ponce De Leon Baseball League	Disagree. In our experience, the larger users often reserve field time they don't wind up needing after their schedules have been finalized. This "excess" field time is not always released back to the Permit Office for redistribution, and no incentive currently exists to do so. It is our belief that a switch to the hourly fees we're proposing would help to motivate these groups to release unneeded fields for a refund or credit.
Release of unneeded fields will lead to more unpermitted use by small groups, not less.	Anna Duff – Ponce De Leon Baseball League	Disagree. While we agree that many small groups are in less need of organized time slots than the larger groups, there are a number of new or "splinter" groups that are interested in growing and therefore require a reliable schedule of fields for their league. It is these groups whose requests we have been unable to accommodate, and we hope they will benefit through the release program.
Does not understand prohibition on permitting adult practices.	Peter D'Orazio, MSBL team manager	Given the significant demand for field time, priority is given to games, but adults are not prohibited from requesting a field for practice.
Concerned that increase will steer MSBL away from MD fields and back to VA where fields are free.	Peter D'Orazio, MSBL team manager	There may be some attrition due to the increased fees, but we cannot afford to offer our fields at no cost or continue to provide them for a nominal fee. In FY09, more than $9M was allocated to field maintenance and our budget could not absorb a $9M price tag to allow us to offer our fields free of charge. As it is, it costs us more than $69/hour to maintain our fields, yet we are proposing to charge only $3/hour for local fields and $15-$35/hour for regional and recreational fields.

An across-board-increase for utilities is not appropriate.	Douglas P. Schuessler – Montgomery Soccer Inc	Agree. We have proposed a separate $15/hour charge to offset athletic field utility costs; this charge will only be paid by groups using fields with lights during evening hours: It is not an across-the-board increase. The department pays $25/hour or more now to cover field utility costs. These costs are expected to rise in double digits in FY10. An offset is needed to cover these costs and continue to offer this service.
Existing athletic field infrastructure is insufficient and needs to be reviewed.	Douglas P. Schuessler, Montgomery Soccer Inc	Agree. Additional fields and use of artificial turf should be explored to address growing demand.
It is not possible to achieve higher ball field quality and playability while at the same time actually increasing the intensity of use for those very same fields.	Douglas P. Schuessler, Montgomery Soccer Inc	Agree. Overuse is a very real problem. With the kind of use our fields see, additional resources may not ultimately have any measurable impact on field quality. Our Athletic Field Inspection and Evaluation program will help us answer that question. However, it would be difficult if not impossible to decrease the current use level of our fields. Most are not fenced, and posted signs are often ignored or removed. If we can't limit the amount of play, our hope is to limit the amount of irresponsible, unpermitted play by organized groups and better educate users on when and when not to use fields. Much of the field damage occurs when groups play in inclement weather or on fields closed for repair or renovation. Fields that are vacant but unused by the permitted group are perfect targets for unpermitted play by smaller organized groups. If larger groups release the fields they don't need, our hope is to repermit them to groups we can educate about how to use fields responsibly.
Ball field work groups that bring together	Douglas P. Schuessler,	Agree. Staff will host a ball field user

leaders of these organizations with our public leaders should be re-established.	Montgomery Soccer Inc	forum in spring 2009 to identify all relevant issues and determine the best approach moving forward.
A more detailed analysis is needed to more fully compare Montgomery County permit fees to those of other jurisdictions that receive less funding via taxes.	Douglas P. Schuessler, Montgomery Soccer Inc	While additional analysis could certainly be performed, staff believes the fees proposed are fair and compare well to other jurisdictions – particularly the $3/hr fee for local fields which is well below that of any other local jurisdiction. It should be noted as well that the proposed fees for both local and regional/recreational fields are far less than actual costs for maintenance and upkeep.
The absolute cost associated with these permits would seem to vastly exceed the actual administrative expense in many cases.	Douglas P. Schuessler, Montgomery Soccer Inc	In FY09, more than $9M was allocated to field maintenance. It costs the department more than $69/hour to maintain our fields. The current Montgomery Parks, M-NCPPC user policy states, *"User fees are charged for those facilities, services and programs, which provide an individual benefit or an exclusive use. User fees may also be charged to balance use with capacity and demand, and to allocate scarce resources."* The $48 fee currently charged for local fields covers only the administrative costs of distributing the permits that grant exclusive use. As demand continues to surpass capacity and use continues to increase, we need to replace the current administrative fee with user fees that will help manage use and offset increasing maintenance costs.
Alternative approaches such as Adopt-A-Field should be considered.	Douglas P. Schuessler, Montgomery Soccer Inc	Agree. We currently have several Adopt-A-Field agreements in place and would welcome discussion with other groups interested in pursuing these types of partnerships.

The fee associated with obtaining a ball field permit in Montgomery County has increased anywhere from 320% to 6,720% as compared to 2001 levels, depending on the field in question. In 2001, a single ball field permit could be obtained for all 7 days in a week for a permit fee of $15...In 2008, that same ball field permit fee has increased to $48 for each individual day....and in many instances the field has been subdivided into 2 or 3 parts, each of which has a separate permit fee.	Douglas P. Schuessler, Montgomery Soccer Inc	The fee and permit structure described here is that of a different agency: Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF). User groups are now able to permit up to four days of use on one local park field for the full twelve-week season for a single $48 administrative fee. They do not pay $48 for each individual day for park fields. Some Park softball fields do have rectangular overlays, but no Park fields have *"...been subdivided into 2 or 3 parts, each of which has a separate permit fee."*

Montgomery Parks, M-NCPPC

Athletic Field Fee Schedule

Effective as of the 2009 Spring/Summer Season

Permit Fees	Effective 1/1/08
Local Park Fields	$3 per hour for games (two hour minimum) $3 per hour for practices (one hour maximum)
Regional and Recreational Park Fields	$15 per hour for youth (17 and under), all sports, unlit fields $30 per hour for youth (17 and under), all sports, lit fields $20 per hour for adults (18 and up), all sports, unlit fields $35 per hour for adults (18 and up), all sports, lit fields
One Time Use	Follow separate fee schedule for special events and tournaments
Camps and Clinics	Follow separate fee schedule for camps/clinics/classes

NOTES:

- The lit field fee will be charged at the following times:
  April – September 7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.
  October-November 5:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

- A reduction in fees will be negotiated on an annual basis with the Recreation Department to ensure program fees remain affordable.

MCP-CTRACK

From: Jackson, Arnita
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2008 4:57 PM
To: MCP-Chairman
Subject: FW: Fee Increase Feedback

From: amanda anderson [mailto:tintin59@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2008 3:34 PM
To: MCP-Parks
Subject: Fee Increase Feedback

In response to the board request for any additional feedback regarding the proposed fee increase, I would like to submit the following comments. I understand and appreciate the rationale for raising the fee levels for Montgomery County. As a player in both WAWSL and in Montgomery County Masters Over 40 Recreation, I am acutely aware of the condition that some of the fields are in. The concerns I have are similar to those raised by others in their testimony. First, the timeline for advising leagues of permitted sites must be sufficient for them to turn back any unused time. Second, a reduced rate should be considered for turning back fields during the season (a second gate, if you were) which could also be posted so those desiring fields would know when to relook for available fields. This second deadline for turning fields would not return the entire fee, but perhaps half or one-third--again to discourage overpermitting. Third, the greatest concern I have heard is that the monies raised by the fee increase would not be used to improve fields. If the increase does directly translate to better fields, then I believe (as a player, not a league spokesman), that there would be ample support. Lastly, although I love playing on real grass the opening of the possibility for turf fields would greatly support the amount of play that is ongoing in Montgomery County. As I do not currently play on any mixed use fields, my only concern is that creating single use fields in the county would significantly decrease the amount of soccer fields available for use (and which are significantly used).

Amanda Anderson
602 Lanark Way
Silver Spring, MD 20901
(I attended the meeting but am currently out of town--thank you for your patience).

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(10)

COMMUNITY EXHIBIT
RECEIVED BY MCPB
DATE: 9/15/08
ITEM NO. 2
EXHIBIT NO. 6

Item #2

September 10, 2008

M.N.C.P.P.C.
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, 20910

RECEIVED
SEP 15 2008
OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing with respect to the proposal from the Commission to increase fees for the use of athletic fields, on which a hearing is to be held on September 15. Respecfully, I strongly oppose the proposal.

I have been a resident of Montgomery County for nearly 25 years. During that time, I have made extensive use of the parks and athletic fields offered. I believe we have an excellent system in our County, and I commend the Commission for it.

However, raising fees on the athletic fields is out of line. The soccer fields, which I use nearly every week as part of the 45+ Men's Soccer League, are in terrible shape. With the gullies carved out by rain, the isolated tufts of grass, and the rocks and broken glass littering the surface, it is almost hazardous to play soccer on these fields. To raise the fees with no commensurate increase in maintenance is almost unconscionable.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject the proposal to raise the fees.

Thank you.

David Modi

David Modi
5900 Wild Flower Ct.
Rockville 20855
(301) 869-6207

Testimony Regarding Proposed Fee Increases
DONNA W. BARTKO, CHAIR
COUNTY-WIDE RECREATION (& PARKS)
ADVISORY BOARD
Monday, September 15, 2008

Mr. Hanson and Planning Board Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you and to testify on behalf of the County-wide Recreation & Parks Advisory Board.

The County-wide board understands the need for the proposed increased in usage fees for ball fields and because of the budgetary constraints the county is facing; we sanction the increased usage fees for ball fields. We also sanction the restructuring of those fees from "block charges" by days to "hourly charges" by field which we agree with Montgomery Parks should reduce the "hoarding" of field time by historic users and allow more user groups to use fields legally and to pay for that use.

CWR&PAB feels though that a discounted fee schedule MUST be developed, advertised and charged for not-for-profit organizations serving three critical groups in our county. Specifically: Those with special needs, those with therapeutic recreational needs and seniors. Any and All organizations whose primary mission (as demonstrated by their written mission statement) is to serve one or more of these groups must be granted a <u>significant and meaningful</u> discount to support their activities. Clearly, our County Executive has publicly noted that these groups are worthy of special county support and our board has supported increasing ball field fees with theses caveats at the forefront.

We are also extremely concerned and want to strongly express to the Planning Board and to Montgomery Parks that our support of increasing ball field fees was partially based on the written presentation to our board that indicated additional funds generated by increased fees will indeed be put back into ball field and other athletic fields for maintenance and upkeep.

Without assuring that our ball fields are properly maintained and kept up to proper playing standards, we run a significant risk of increasing injuries to our children and to all our residents who are playing on fields that are not level and are unsafe. Therefore, we want to underscore our concern for the proper maintenance and upkeep for ball fields and athletic fields and want assurance that the increased fees will indeed be used for those items as presented.

Our last area of review was the costs of fees associated with Department of Recreation programs. Over the last several years, as fees have required significant evaluation and increases, one of the hardest hit "customers" of Parks is Recreation. Since the County-wide board has been striving to become more vocal and involved as an advisory to Parks, Parks and Recreation have made progress in working together to establish a better system of "customer" relations, if you will.

Our board was concerned that Parks and Recreation work out a mutually acceptable fee structure system for the benefit of the citizens of Montgomery County. We are pleased that there is an agreement in theory that will be recorded officially, perhaps in some contract form that will set a sum certain for Recreation's ball & athletic field costs based on the previous three year's historical data. That sum will remain constant until a trigger point - up or down - to be determined is reached at which time another flat fee will be negotiated. There will also be required notification dates to assure that Recreation has adequate time to include any additional funding needs on its FFI request.

Tonight we are testifying before you as advisory to both Montgomery County Recreation Department and Montgomery Parks. I am sure you have noted that we have unofficially changed our title to County-wide Recreation & Parks Advisory Board. Montgomery County, Maryland is one of the very few areas in the country where the two departments act individually which presents significant problems not only in overlapping costs, but overlapping programs and confusion for county residents who are often unclear as to which department handles what area.

Since I became chair of the County-wide Board last year I have been imploring Montgomery Parks to work more closely with our advisory boards and to take advantage of the many ways in which our boards can be helpful, supportive and provide needed feedback from county residents. Ms. Bradford was available for a meeting once and she did indicate that Montgomery Parks would be much more disposed to working with our groups, that she would be attending our board meetings on a regular basis and she agreed with the language of our new mission statement which included Montgomery Parks in the title and more clearly stated our advisory position to Parks. I also met with Mr. Terry Brooks and then the entire Public Partnership Vetting Committee to request that a member of the Recreation Department (Division Chief Robin Riley) and myself as Chair of the Countywide Board be placed on the PPPVC as ex-officio members to allow for advisory experience and some public input prior to public private partnerships being sent to the Planning Board before any public input or any public advice or comment. Unfortunately, that group has not been as enthusiastic as we'd hoped; even the Pauline Betts Addie Tennis Partnership was not even presented to the Recreation Department's Western Area Board prior to a public announcement although even though this board had been active and working on Cabin John Tennis for over 15 years.
As you can clearly see and tonight's testimony clearly demonstrates, our advisory boards are an important element to advising and to representing the views of the public through a more formal and organized function.

We hope that our testimony tonight is merely the beginning of being more involved with Montgomery Parks and helping that agency as an advocate and source for feedback and information. Our goal this year to become even more of a positive source for Montgomery Parks and we hope to be back testifying in front of the Planning Board more often on Parks issues.

Respectfully submitted.

Donna Bartko.

MCP-CTRACK

From: Doug Schuessler [schuessler@msisoccer.org]
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2008 4:23 PM
To: MCP-Chairman
Cc: jeffkauffman; Steve Ertel; ap@prillconstruction.com
Subject: Public Testimony Input
Attachments: MSI Testimony.pdf

Dear Chairman,

Please find attached a submittal for the public record and consideration in regards to the Department of Parks' "Proposal for Implementation of Hourly Athletic Field Fees". Thank you for the opportunity for input, and please acknowledge receipt of this submittal via email reply at your convenience. Thank you very much.

Regards,

Douglas P. Schuessler
Executive Director
MSI

15

September 22, 2008

Montgomery County Planning Board
Mcp-chairman@mncppc-mc.org

Dear Planning Board:

I am writing in response to the "Proposal for Implementation of Hourly Athletic Field Fees" associated with permitting Montgomery County ball fields. On behalf of our 14,000 players and families, we would like to express our strong opposition to the proposed fee increases. Our opposition focuses on the extent to which we believe that the proposed permit fee increases will be counterproductive to the goals and objectives stated in the Memorandum referenced above, as well as adding yet another increase in fees for our families, especially at a time of so many difficulties facing our families and all community-oriented organizations.

Purpose #1
Help offset the continually increasing costs of utilities, field maintenance and renovation for our heavily used fields.

Discussion
The significant cost of utilities largely is limited to those fields with lights. Overall, such fields represent a small fraction of the total number of ball fields in Montgomery County, and nearly all of them are diamonds (I believe that only one lighted rectangular field is able to be permitted for use in Montgomery County). Additionally, such utility costs overwhelmingly are related to uses other than ball fields, such as tennis courts, ice rinks, etc., that are not covered by these increases (many of these recreational facilities have no user or permit fees, whatsoever) As such, an across the board fee increase is not appropriate.

The need for extensive field maintenance and renovation for heavily used fields is driven not by requirements for improved maintenance, but by a failure to develop sufficient infrastructure to support an ever-growing population in Montgomery County. Just as we need more roads, schools, and police/fire protection as our County grows, we also need to proportionately expand our Parks infrastructure. Failure to do so has led to vastly overused ball fields that simply can not be maintained properly, regardless of how much money is available to put towards that effort.

MONTGOMERY SOCCER, INC.
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(301) 762-4MSI • Fax (301) 762-6404
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Purpose #2
Generate additional funds to improve the quality and playability of our fields.

Discussion:
It is important to note that there is some vitally contradictory discussion within the Department of Parks Memorandum as it relates to the steps necessary to improve the quality and playability of our fields. It indicates that "several national studies have shown any field that experiences more than 80 uses in one year suffers permanent damage; the majority of our fields experience more than 200 uses in one year, and demand continues to increase." Further, the Memorandum acknowledges "that does not include the significant amount of free, walk-on play these fields experience that increases the amount of annual maintenance required." However, the Memorandum goes on to suggest that a switch to an hourly fee schedule should enable "new permits to be issued to other groups".

The Memorandum also states that an hourly fee is necessary in order to "maximize use on each field and satisfy demand". There is an inherent disconnect in the stated objectives; it simply is not possible to achieve higher ball field quality and playability, while at the same time actually increasing the intensity of use for those very same fields. This is an opinion that not only is supported by the national studies cited in the Department of Parks Memorandum, but one that is wholly supported within the Parks and Recreation community. Simply put, these fields are not designed to support excessive play.

In addition, the Memorandum indicates a full year with the proposed hourly fee structure should be able to increase revenues by more than 30% overall. That would represent an increase of approximately $172,000. However, the Memorandum acknowledges that figure is a best case scenario, one likely to be significantly offset by a number of factors that would substantially reduce that figure. The MCRD example that is cited clearly portrays how that likely would play out (it also is important to note that everybody's budgets will be affected in the same manner as that of MCRD).

Lastly, it is of paramount importance to note that the "first $100K" in increased revenues will not result in enhanced maintenance towards increased quality and playability of our ball fields; rather, it will serve to replace anticipated budget cuts. Given the Memorandum's acknowledged likely scenario for substantial offsets to the most optimistic outcome, the most likely outcome will be that the proposed fee increase simply will enable budget cuts to be passed on to the most responsible user groups in our County.

Purpose #3
Discourage over-permitting and non-use of fields by large organizations.

Discussion

Certainly, this is a positive goal that should be encouraged. However, it will be important for permit agencies to work together with user groups to ensure that there are effective solutions to the difficulties posed for community youth recreation league management when access to permitted fields is denied on an ad hoc basis for activities such as school fairs, community activities, or other one-time uses.

Purpose #4
Provide more opportunities for new groups to gain weekend and other field time.

Discussion
I refer to the discussion associated with Purposes #1 and #2. There will be a steady increase in demand for ball fields as our population continues to increase. There must be a proportionate increase in the number of ball fields that "catches up" with the failure of infrastructure development to sufficiently match population growth. Simply "squeezing" more groups onto the same fields will be counterproductive, and will further exacerbate an already difficult situation. Again, we must expand Parks infrastructure!

Purpose #5
Bring our athletic field fees more in line with other regional jurisdictions.

Discussion
A much more detailed study would be necessary before being able to comment in detail in this regard. For example, the level of taxes assessed within Montgomery County already is at the very high end of the region, with substantial funding support for our Department of Parks. The extent to which our Department of Parks funding via taxes exceeds that of other jurisdictions would be important information to analyze. Other factors are important to review as well.

Of note is the fact that the fee associated with obtaining a ball field permit in Montgomery County has increased anywhere from 320% to 6,720% as compared to FY01 levels, depending on the field in question. In 2001, a single ball field permit could be obtained for all 7 days in a week for a permit fee of $15 ($2.14/field/day of the week). In 2008, that same ball field permit fee has increased to $48 for each individual day ($336/week), and in many instances the field has been subdivided into 2 or 3 parts, each of which has a separate permit fee (resulting in a cost of $672-$1,008/week).

The permit fees today are called "Administrative Fees", but the absolute cost associated with these permits would seem to vastly exceed the actual administrative expense in many cases. In addition, the administrative expenses in discussion already are supported in large part by tax dollars, and should be. Without a more detailed analysis of the entire framework of funding across the jurisdictions cited, it is not possible to more fully address the comparability of Montgomery County permit fees to those of other jurisdictions, and conclusions should not be drawn without that more full analysis.

Summary

The proposed increase in fees will not provide the benefits intended and needed for our community. In fact, they will only serve to further widen the gap between the positive impact of responsible user groups and the negative impact of irresponsible and un-permitted user groups, as well as creating the types of inevitable conflict cited in the Memorandum. Montgomery County leaders will be well served to consider the following:

1. The existing infrastructure of Montgomery County ball fields must be reviewed, with consideration given to re-allocating ball field resources to more appropriately serve the demonstrated interests of Montgomery County's citizens (with conversions, as necessary and appropriate). The historical development of regional parks, recreational parks, local parks, and school fields served interests well upon initial development, but as community interests change, so must the infrastructure. Towards a similar end, anticipated demographic shifts also should be factored into a long range plan to develop a well-suited infrastructure of ball fields. This will lead to a better balance between supply and demand, and therefore a more balanced and sustainable maintenance environment.

2. Responsible user group organizations represent the citizens of Montgomery County, and for the most part simply are variations in the manner in which our government provides vital community services that otherwise would be provided directly by our Recreation Departments. The unique opportunities presented by these organizations need to be considered more carefully, in terms of ways in which their increased flexibility may create opportunities for partnerships that result in actual improvements in quality and playability of ball fields.

3. Ball field work groups that bring together leaders of these organizations with our public leaders should be re-established to deal effectively with problems that diminish the recreational experience for our youth and adults. Examples of such problems would include the unfortunate conversion of many fields 8-10 years ago, creating diamonds where previously rectangles existed with the idea that an overlay environment would provide valuable flexibility in use, and the installation of portable goals on these overlay fields, as well as others, only to have them removed due to safety concerns, without replacing them with any alternative (such as permanent pipe goals).

4. Alternative approaches to programs such as Adopt-a-Field should be considered, in an attempt to discern ways in which "Value Added Partnerships" can be created between non-profit organizations and Montgomery County. The ability to leverage private dollars and enthusiasm for community benefit is an opportunity that should be motivating to all involved..

In conclusion, I encourage Montgomery County leaders to create working groups with community leaders that call upon all involved to engage in an effort to find solutions that

best serve our citizens, that are forward-thinking, and that result in a collaborative effort that achieves true success.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our thoughts and input. I look forward to hearing more in the future, and the opportunity to fully participate in any work group you deem appropriate to help create a better future for all of Montgomery County!

Regards,

Douglas P. Schuessler

Douglas P. Schuessler
Executive Director
Montgomery Soccer (MSI)

September 15, 2008
Montgomery County Planning Board

Testimony on Behalf of Ginny Gong, Director Interagency Coordinating Board for the Community Use of Public Facilities Montgomery County Government

My name is Elizabeth Habermann, Program Manager for the Interagency Coordinating Board (ICB) for the Community Use of Public Facilities. I am testifying on behalf of Ginny Gong, Director, ICB for Community Use of Public Facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to lend our support for the Department of Parks' Proposal for Implementation of Hourly Athletic Field Fees in lieu of seasonal permits. For many years, the Office of Community Use of Public Facilities has worked collaboratively with the Parks Department to facilitate community access of this important County resource.

The ICB includes major stakeholders such as MCPS and the Board of Education, M-NCPPC, County Council, Montgomery County Government, and most importantly, the citizens of Montgomery County. The ICB voted at its September 10th board meeting to implement a $3 per hour fee for reservation permits of elementary and middle school fields in lieu of the $48 administrative fee per daily seasonal permit previously assessed. The board made this change with the expectation that hourly fees will not only increase the availability of field time but also create a more equitable rate per hour of use.

From our own experience, we know that there exists a tremendous variation in the number of field use hours covered by a $48 permit, ranging from a one-time use of one hour to a team or league permitting a field for an entire season. A number of groups "overbook" to facilitate scheduling flexibility in case they need more field time, to minimize wear and tear on their assigned field, or to protect their "historical use" for a field they might need in the future. At present no incentive exists for a group to "return" unneeded time.

We also anticipate an improvement in our ability to track who the field is actually being used by. CUPF denies permits to some groups due to unavailability, who later complain that the field is regularly vacant. Vacant fields are frequently used by unpermitted or adult walk-on groups making it difficult to follow-up with complaints if litter or other issues arise.

Increased use continues to accelerate deterioration of fields and intensify maintenance needs. These costs are shared by all taxpayers alike regardless of their field use. The proposed fees would require field users to bear a more proportional share of the resulting costs. Enhanced investment in field maintenance contributes to the availability of safe, quality fields for community use.

I would like to conclude by congratulating the Parks Department for taking the lead and working closely with citizen groups to present this proposal. This proposal is consistent with a proposal made in 2001 by the Interagency Ball Field Users Advisory Group which also recommended an hourly fee. Since then, the demand and need for this type of approach to field use has only increased. Thank you for your consideration.

Good evening, my name is Denise Gorham. I am Executive Director of BCC Baseball; and while I support the proposal to raise fees, there are some things I want you to understand.

BCC is a non profit league providing youth baseball to 4,000 boys and girls in the lower part of the County. In 2007, our permit expense for fields (both schools and parks) was $40,000. I estimate the cost for 2008 to be $54,000, and under the proposed fee structure permits will cost BCC Baseball $100,000. Yes—we are the league noted in the proposal and yes we do bring in $1,000,000 in player dues and yes it will only cost our players an additional $6 per season. So although the numbers sound astronomical, the amount we must raise our dues for permits is negligible. But we too are faced with increasing costs for everything we provide--uniforms, umpires, equipment, trophies etc. ($350,000) as well as our single biggest expense—adopt-a- fields which in 2007 was $250,000.

BCC Baseball has adopted 22 park & school fields in the county. We hire contractors to provide the required maintenance dictated by the adopt-a-field contract. This translates to roughly $10,000 per field. We can expect the same increases for maintaining these fields that *Parks* faces. Thus the increase we must pass along to our players will be more than the $6 per season to cover just the permit fees. The economic problems that plague us all will trickle down to the kids playing sports. I get it and I am sympathetic to the plight of *Parks* and the dilemma of providing maintenance for athletic fields which are used only by the county's athletes, not the entire tax paying base.

The proposal states that the Department of Recreation will be given a discounted rate, and that all users will now pay up front. I was unaware that some groups enjoy benefits not shared by all. I cannot get a permit without first handing over the league credit card. The single largest user of athletic fields is the Department of Recreation ($203,000 in 2008) and enjoys priority over all user groups for fields. If the department's fee were to double, as it will for many other leagues, the goal of $500,000 would be easily met. But since MCRD's rate will be discounted, we other users will be providing the bulk of the renovation reserve. I understand the Rec Department's budget has been set and cannot support higher than budgeted permit fees. But what precludes Rec from raising fees as you are asking of us? The competition for field time at least in lower Montgomery County for leagues such as BCC Baseball and CYO is with the recreation department and other adult softball leagues. In fact we have to argue with adult players to exercise our permits at Cabin John Regional Park. Surely if we are paying by the hour, we must be allowed to begin at our permitted hour. Park staff should be ready and willing to see that the hourly changeovers are made in a timely fashion without the necessity of calling park police. I have advocated for youth priority on fields for fifteen years to no avail. It seems a triple whammy when we pay more, have a lower priority and cannot get on the field on time.

So raise the fees, change the structure for assessing these fees and hope to bring in an extra $500,000. Our permits costs are just about evenly split between M-NCPPC and CUPF. Thus BCC Baseball will provide 10% of *Parks* $500,000 goal. Can we and the

other diamond users expect 10% or more of the renovations? The answer is no. Look at the schedule for ballfield renovations for 2008 and 2009. Every single one is a soccer field. And why is this? Because the fields that will be renovated will be the ones most in need of repair. Baseball and softball fields are not damaged by the sports played on them. Twenty or more pairs of feet will run up and down a soccer field while three outfielders stand in a diamond's outfield. On a game day, six or more soccer games are played from 9:00-3:00 (120 pairs of feet) while for baseball there will be three games and only nine pairs of feet in the outfield. Therein lies the difference in the cost of maintaining the two different fields. So while I support *Parks* in the effort to create a fund to improve maintenance, I fear that BCC Baseball's 10% will never go to baseball.

I ask you how can this inequity be remedied? Baseball/Softball organizations are the primary holders of adopt-a-field contracts. We adopt these fields to provide a better level of maintenance and therefore safer fields for our players. Why do the soccer organizations shun adopt-a-field agreements? Because it costs too much and there is very little bang for the buck.

The commission can help in a number of ways. (1) Guarantee that the hourly fee for permits on fields that have been adopted is waived for the adopting organization. (2) Remove the soccer overlays on softball fields and provide equal access for soccer and baseball on their designated fields both fall and spring. The idea that a dirt diamond such as Falls Road cannot be permitted to a baseball team in the fall, even though no one else is seeking to permit it, is absurd. (3) Review the priority afforded MCRD and consider giving first priority to Montgomery County's kids.

So in closing, I say adopt the fees. But let everyone share in the rewards. Take a close look at permitting regulations and priorities, cut the red tape. Evaluate the procedures to provide better, faster less cumbersome service. Reduce the piles of paper—go green, use the internet to issue permits. Give organizations that submit for their entire league some kind of perk. BCC Baseball saves countless hours for the permit office by assigning practice slots to our 350 teams and dealing with the complaints. And please consider how to share the benefits with all user groups.

Thank you for listening.

New Athletic Field Fee Presentation to Planning Board
Statement by Gerad L. McCowin
Gaithersburg Area Church Mens Softball League
8405 Saint Regis Way
Montgomery Village, MD 20886
301-963-7117
September 15, 2008

Good evening. I'm Jerry McCowin. I represent the Gaithersburg Area Church Mens Softball League. That's a long name for a small league that was initiated some 40 years ago as an alternative to existing municipal and county leagues for churches to come together to play organized softball.

This past year we had 14 teams representing 12 churches from Gaithersburg, Rockville, Germantown, and Darnestown. Eight teams played on Monday nights and six teams on Tuesday night, with a playoff series at the end of the season between the top four teams from each night. Each team was scheduled to play 12 games during the season plus there were seven playoff games scheduled. This year we averaged over 15 players among the 14 teams. Our league had a team fee of $70.00 for this past year. This fee covers the various expenses of the league including the cost of softballs for all games, umpires for playoff games, trophies, plus the cost for field permits.

We received permits for six fields – three fields that were used on Monday and Tuesday nights and on one Saturday morning; one field that was used on Monday nights; one field that was used on Tuesday nights; and one field for which we returned the permit in early April when it was clear we would not be able to use it. Our total cost for field permits was $288.00. This represents approximately 30 percent of the amount raised by league fees.

Based on our projected 16 teams for the coming year and the need for four fields on Monday night and four fields on Tuesday night plus our playoff series, the proposed fee structure would cost our league a total of $618. This presumes that we would ask for two hours for each night game and two hours for each of the seven playoff games. This is an increase of 115 percent over the amount that we paid for field permits, this past season and would raise our league fee from $70 to $90. This may not seem like much but you have to recognize that this is occurring almost four months before the date when we have traditionally held our league start-up meeting, late March.

I received several comments when I sent the proposal to the coaches for review. The few responses that I received ranged from: "We will pay this new tax" to "The bottom line is maintenance costs are increasing and the proposed increase is modest." I don't think any in our league question the need to increase fees and the proposed fees seem reasonable even though they will result in a major increase in our league fees.

However, we are concerned about how the new fee structure will be implemented, particularly in view of the fact that we will have to be prepared to respond to the new fee structure in just over

two months. The proposal that is being presented for your consideration is largely silent on how the Department of Parks plans to collect and administer the fees that are being proposed. If you carefully read the proposal, the implementation plan seems to be the following:
1. Applicants for permits will have to specify the number of hours and fields that they intend to use over the following year along with their request for fields.
2. Applicants will have to pay the total amount of fees based on the total number of hours to receive the permits.
3. Leagues would be credited for time not used.

However, you have to read carefully to tease this information out of Parks' proposal. It is not clear whether or how leagues could receive refunds for hours not used. The proposal states that "future use credits" would be issued instead of monetary refunds but then goes on to state that "No credits or refunds would be given for hours or fields released after the established release date" giving the implication that there are circumstances under which monetary refunds would be given. I don't know about you but, even in this computerized era, I prefer money-in-hand to a "future use credit." If we turn back one field next year -- 24 hours of play time -- plus have several rain outs like we did this year, say six days – 18 hours of play time -- we would be owed a refund of $1[illegible].00. To our league, that is a substantial amount of money that we would prefer to receive as a refund particularly when it is not clear how the "future use credits" concept would work.

The proposal is silent on how and when you would request the "future use credits" (I would prefer a refund) if use of a field is cancelled because of rain or other reason.

There just seem to be a lot of things missing in how Parks intends to implement a plan to collect and administer the new fee system. Our league does not object to the new fee proposal but we do have serious concerns over the lack of a detailed implementation plan. This is what our league would like to have input on.

The proposed fee structure. From our vantage point, you probably ought to approve it but on a tentative basis pending the development of an implementation plan that has received meaningful input from the leagues that are using the local and regional ball fields. That has to be started pretty soon because there are less than 80 days until December 1.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you tonight.

Gerad L. McCowin

Montgomery County Senior Sports Association

11906 Renwood Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20852

301-231-7822
RICEJOHN16@aol.com

To: Montgomery County Planning Board

From: Montgomery County Senior Sports Association

Re: Department of Parks Proposal for Hourly Athletic Field Fees

My name is John R. Rice, Treasurer of the Montgomery County Senior Sports Association. Marshall Kramer, Commissioner of our Tuesday/Thursday 60+ Morning Softball League is also present this evening. The testimony I am to give has been reviewed and approved by our Board of Directors.

The Montgomery County Senior Sports Association (MCSSA) was founded in 1992. Our purpose is to provide opportunities for and encouragement to senior citizens to exercise and improve their quality of life through participation in organized sports programs.

MCSSA has over 600 active members and we provide opportunities for member participation in basketball, volleyball and softball throughout the year. The officers of our organization are unpaid volunteers elected by the membership.

Our softball program is our largest activity. We sponsor 8 softball leagues in which 62 teams participate with an average of 15 players per team. We have Spring/Summer and Fall leagues. Our goal is to provide opportunities for participation at a cost that all senior citizens can readily afford.

The Commissioners of our leagues and the managers/coaches of our teams are unpaid volunteers. We strive to hold down costs by competitive bidding for the purchase of team jerseys, softballs and by employing umpires from our association membership at reduced fees. Our biggest expense is for field fees.

Three of our softball leagues are played in the morning between 9:30 a.m. and noon at Olney Manor Park and Wheaton Regional Park. These leagues include a 70+ League on Monday morning and a Tuesday/Thursday 60+ League both held in the Spring/Summer and the Fall. A Wednesday morning Co-Rec League for women over 40 and men over 60 is held only in the Spring/Summer season. According to the proposed fee schedule, we would pay the $20 per hour fee for unlit fields for these leagues since no electricity is needed at this time of day.

Our other five leagues are played in the evening. Registration for these leagues is processed through the Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRD) and games are played on lit fields. The proposed fee schedule lists $35 per hour with an "exclusive discount" for programs operated by the MCRD. This rate will apply to our Women Masters League and the Men's 50+, 55+ and 60+ seniors who participate in these evening leagues. We support the "exclusive discount" proposed for the MCRD in 2009 and as needed in the future.

Although we have become accustomed to obtaining a "senior discount", we do not take issue with the proposed fee schedule. However, we would like to have some flexibility in working with the Department of Parks concerning the "release dates".

Our primary concern is for our morning leagues. The 60+ and 70+ morning leagues are draft leagues. Players register for the league or leagues in which they wish to play. Commissioners and Managers then rate the players by ability and form equally balanced teams. The Wednesday morning Co-Rec league accepts team registrations. It is not practical for us to set registration deadlines prior to April 1st in the Spring and August 1st in the Fall because of players returning late from winter homes in Florida and elsewhere and from vacations in late summer. It takes two weeks thereafter to form the teams and prepare the game schedules. The Department of Park's release dates of March 1st and August 1st do not correspond with our requirements.

Once we know the number of teams and prepare a game schedule, we can accurately file for permits for the fields needed in the morning for each season. In the past we have typically used the three fields at Olney on Mondays, three fields at Olney and one at Wheaton on Tuesday/Thursday, and three fields at Olney and one at Wheaton on Wednesdays. Depending on the number of players and teams, we may need one field more or less each season. Our budget does not allow for a situation where we would permit for a field in advance that we don't end up using and having to pay for that field for the entire season.

We don't have much competition for fields in the morning. Since our leagues have a long history of continuance, we would like some flexibility in working with the Department of Parks in reserving the fields we have used for over a decade. We can alert the Department of our anticipated needs in advance of the stated release dates, and file for the permits prior to April 15th and August 15th for the Spring/Summer and Fall seasons respectively.

Thank you for your consideration.

September 15, 2008

My name is Anna Duff and I am here as a representative from the Ponce De Leon Baseball League.

Just to give some background, we currently have about 700 players For Spring, and Fall Seasons and we utilize principally Montgomery County Regional Fields each season.

Very briefly, while we understand that the county has an interest in increasing its revenues from these fields, for a variety of important reasons,
and while some increase in permit prices may be warranted, due to the state of the economy and the local budgets, it is our position that the county should also recognize that some of the proposed rate increases are extreme and will likely have a detrimental effect on the county's revenues and will not benefit the county or the players who use these fields.

For example, the county's proposed increase in the evening hour or lit field usage - is essentially a 75% increase in the cost of the field permits. Whereas now the lit fees average approximately 20 dollars per hour, the proposed to 35 dollars per hour is a 75% increase in the equivalent hourly fee.

Even with rising costs, and the state of the economy, gas prices going up and so forth, in no other industry does the value of any single commodity go up 75% in one year. And put as simply as possible, we cannot afford a rate increase of such a high percentage, we are not adjusted or equipped to eat that cost, and we do believe it may discourage a lot of players from playing at nights in our league were we to pass this cost on to the players.

While the fee increase proposal contends that organized groups such as ours have a legitimate need to have set game times and therefore need to ensure dedicated field time is available, and while I would agree with that sentiment, the report is wrong in that it assumes we will be able to continue to reserve these fields in Montgomery County with a 75% increase in field prices per game. It does not make sense for us to do so, when there are cheaper options available elsewhere.

For example, the Fairfax county Department of Community and Recreation Services charges $5.50 per county resident and $20 per non-county resident PER SEASON.

Accordingly, the higher prices will force our medium size organization and presumably other similar organizations to relocate thereby resulting in a considerable loss of revenue for the county. While the county is concerned with principally raising 100,000.00 per year from these rate increases, I can alone speak to approximately $5,000 in losses the county may incur if my league is not able to afford to continue to reserve the night fields.

Additionally, the county's argument that higher prices will force people to not acquire permits they don't need also does not make any sense. I don't think anyone wants to pay

for something they don't need. Surely no one wants to just give away their money to the county without getting something in return. It does not make sense that the county would want to discourage or limit the acquiring of permits by paying customers.

Further, the argument that the county has an interest in freeing up the fields for use by other non-organized or less organized groups - does not guarantee that these "less organized" groups will want to pay for these fields if they are suddenly available. Indeed, the report cites no statistics or other data to indicate this would be the result. Rather the report just assumes that this will result from the larger organizations not being there. But it is our position that this contention is preposterous and that precisely the opposite result will occur. Indeed, the smaller groups will be more likely, with no one on the fields, to simply walk on and play. They are less in need or organized time slots as are the larger organizations, and so the county will lose doubly in this matter, losing not only revenue from the larger leagues reserving the permits, but in that the smaller groups have not reserved, and will incur further costs in policing these unauthorized uses.

It is our position that the larger organizations like us are the entities that sustain regular and consistent use of these fields and therefore, ensure that the field slots are purchased from the county and guarantee a consistent source of revenue.

Now if the county is dead set on raising its fees, then so be it, but I would suggest, humbly that the county consider a more reasonable increase in rates, something on the order or 10-20% and not 75%.

We believe, based on talking to our players, that a more reasonable proposed increase in field costs, will not overly burden our players, and therefore will result in more revenue, instead of less for the county.

Thank you

Anna Duff
General Manager
Ponce de Leon Baseball League

Stookey, Kate

From: DOrazio, Peter [peter.d'orazio@thermofisher.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2008 1:02 PM
To: Bradford, Mary; Albornoz, Gabriel; peter.d'orazio@thermofisher.com
Cc: Allen, Mark; Woodward, Brian; Gillette, William; Stookey, Kate; Giddens, Gene; Tucker, Tiffany
Subject: RE: Wheaton Regional Park Maintenance Issue/ Playground and Field usage

Mrs. Bradford,

I appreciate your attention to these matters.

Of course the most important issue lies in the safety of our parks. Thankfully my son is a tough little guy and was fortunate to receive very minor injuries. We look forward to returning to the park soon and playing after the landing areas have been fixed. We are greatly appreciative! If they need further info as to the location of the problem, please let me know. It is in the large playground area at the top of the hill in the same area as the carousel..

I also understand the need to increase field fees. I do not understand the differential in fees for adults and youth programs, as well as the prohibition for permitting adult practices. I personally would pull 10 permits per year to practice. Meanwhile, little used fields like Wheaton #6 sit unused. I unfortunately can not make the hearing so please submit my correspondence as testimony.

Thanks again for your time and our great parks!

Pete

From: Bradford, Mary [mailto:mary.bradford@montgomeryparks.org]
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2008 12:51 PM
To: Albornoz, Gabriel; peter.d'orazio@thermofisher.com
Cc: Allen, Mark; Woodward, Brian; Gillette, William; Stookey, Kate; Giddens, Gene; Tucker, Tiffany
Subject: RE: Wheaton Regional Park Maintenance Issue/ Playground and Field usage

Thank you, Gabe.

Mr. D'Orazio:

I am the Director of Parks for Montgomery County and am the contact you probably were seeking at the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. We manage the parks, playgrounds, and ballfields.

The incident that happened with your child at the Wheaton Regional Park playground is simply not acceptable, and by copy of this email, I am forwarding your message to both the Park Manager for Wheaton Regional Park as well as our new playground safety inspector team. With around 300 playgrounds in the Montgomery park system, we truly appreciate it when users bring problems to our attention so we can fix them. Thank you.

With respect to the proposed increase in field fees, we share your distress at facing permit increases, but we really had little choice in the matter this year. Our FY 2009 budget for the Department of Parks, as approved by the Montgomery County Council, specifically expects us to make up budget shortfalls this year through increased user fees, and gave us clear direction and a target to meet. Therefore, we surveyed other jurisdictions and found their park fees varied widely and were developed on both an hourly and seasonal basis. Our park fees were very low compared to others. I cannot speak to other school field charges. Our draft fee proposal is intended to increase fees somewhere in the mid-range of what we surveyed and make sure they are fairly and evenly applied.

(30)

We welcome your views on the matter and urge you to testify before the Montgomery County Planning Board regarding your concerns at their hearing on September 15, currently scheduled for around 7 – 7:30 p.m. If you cannot attend, a copy of your communication below will be placed in the record of testimony for the hearing.

I appreciate both of you bringing these matters to my attention.

Regards,

Mary R. Bradford
Director, Montgomery County Department of Parks
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
9500 Brunett Avenue, Silver Spring MD 20901
301-495-2500
www.montgomeryparks.org

From: Albornoz, Gabriel [mailto:Gabriel.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2008 12:15 PM
To: Bradford, Mary
Subject: FW: Wheaton Regional Park Maintenance Issue/ Playground and Field usage

Mary,

I responded and let this gentleman know that you guys were the Department he needed to contact. I told him that I would forward you the e-mail.

Gabe

Gabriel Albornoz
Director
Department of Recreation
Montgomery County, Maryland
Phone: (240) 777-6800
Fax: (240) 777-6803
Cell: (240) 832-1407
E-mail: gabriel.albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov

-----Original Message-----
From: DOrazio, Peter [mailto:peter.d'orazio@thermofisher.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2008 9:42 AM
To: Albornoz, Gabriel
Subject: Wheaton Regional Park Maintenance Issue/ Playground and Field usage

Hello Sir,

I am a livelong Montgomery County and would like to discuss two separate issues.

First, I was playing with my toddler last night at the Wheaton Regional park playground. My son went down one of the slides and fell off when getting to the bottom of the slide. It did not look like a difficult fall, but he instantly started crying loudly. We went to his aid and realized that the landing area was completely worn down at least 6 inches. There was no mulch there and the bedrock was exposed. He hit his head on an exposed rock and bruised/scratched his head. He is ok, but we got lucky as there was a pointed rock sticking up that just missed his face... Some of the areas have rubber landing areas and some don't. I assume these are more for toddlers, but the playground area needs immediate attention. Most slide areas need to be filled in with dirt and covered with mulch. This slide, on a unit in the middle area w/ covered red slide, needs the rock dug/broken out as well as the dirt will just wear away shortly.. I pushed as much mulch into the area as I could, but that will not last long...

Secondly, I have become aware that there is a meeting on 15SEP08 to increase the field usage fee by more than 100%. There would be a higher fee for adult teams. I have played amateur baseball on Montgomery fields since 1982 in the old MCBA and now I manage the teams in the MSBL. I fear that the increased fee will steer the MSBL away from MD games, as they get VA high school fields free of charge. I understand that the utility costs have gone up and will continue to raise, but a more than 100% increase is unjustified. There are other means to raise funds. For example, you do not allow permitting for "adult" practices or scrimmages on your fields. I have tried to permit Wheaton #6 for a scrimmage/practice and would in the future on a weekly basis starting in February if you would allow it. Wheaton and Olney fields sit unused at these times (mornings on weekends in springtime). There are no lighting charges incurred. We don't need the field lined. You would just be taking in free money. The practice of permitting for "youth" practices and not adult ones is discriminatory as the same adults that pay for the youth permits play in the adult leagues and pay the taxes. The youth leagues constantly over-permit the fields, thereby decreasing our ability to use the fields as they sit unused. They have no field shortfall, especially in early springtime... Please reconsider such a large increase in fees and also consider allowing permits for adult practices during certain times of the year when the fields have less usage...

I would appreciate a response to these issues. We love our county facilities and make great use of them. Regarding the field issue, is there a MD park and Planning office to contact about this?

Thanks, Pete

Please Note our New Email Address peter.d'orazio@thermofisher.com
Peter D'Orazio RPh.
Pharmacist
Clinical Research Products Management Center (CRPMC)
1055 First Street, Suite 125, Rockville, MD 20850
Phone: 301-294-0741
Fax: 301-294-2905

MCP-CTRACK

From: Doug Schuessler [schuessler@msisoccer.org]
Sent: Monday, September 22, 2008 4:23 PM
To: MCP-Chairman
Cc: jeffkauffman; Steve Ertel; ap@prillconstruction.com
Subject: Public Testimony Input
Attachments: MSI Testimony.pdf

Dear Chairman,

Please find attached a submittal for the public record and consideration in regards to the Department of Parks' "Proposal for Implementation of Hourly Athletic Field Fees". Thank you for the opportunity for input, and please acknowledge receipt of this submittal via email reply at your convenience. Thank you very much.

Regards,

Douglas P. Schuessler
Executive Director
MSI

(33)

COMMUNITY EXHIBIT
RECEIVED BY MCPB
DATE: 9/15/08
ITEM NO. 2
EXHIBIT NO. 7

Mary Bradford
Director of Parks
Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission
9500 Brunett Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Dear Ms. Bradford:

On behalf of the DC Metro Senior and Adult Baseball League (DCMSBL/MABL) and our Montgomery County player residents, we are writing today to urge the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) not to pass the hourly field fee as proposed. Please understand what our mission is as an organization. Our core mission is to provide adults with the ability to play baseball after high school and well into their adult life.

The current proposal will negatively impact our core mission. While we do share with your goal of a consistent hourly field fee for the regional park ball fields, however, we do not agree with the proposed increases for the hourly field fees. Specifically, our organization is opposed to the proposed hourly field fee rates for regional park ball fields because currently it costs us $50.00 for the use of the regional park ball field whether is it lit or unlit. If the Park Permit office is allowed to implement the proposed hourly field fee for the regional park ball fields, we will be looking at a total of $105.00 per game (3 hr game) on a lighted field and $90.00 per game (3 hr game) without the use of lights.

If this proposal is passed our player fee will need to be increased by $33 per player just to cover the increase. In addition, this comes at a time where we are faced with an additional $12 per player increase, for our 2009 season, to cover increases by the umpire associations we contract with. And we are sure other leagues are faced with this umpire increase.

As an organization we have done everything possible to keep the costs to our players down. Last year, after being notified of an increase in umpire fees, we changed the baseballs we use from the top of the line to what our players are calling sub-standard to avoid an increase in player fees. With this proposed 75% increase in field fees by Montgomery County, this will more in likely be the "last nail in the coffin" for adult baseball in Montgomery County by our organization. Our players just won't be able to afford to play adult amateur baseball and that will be a shame.

The proposed hourly field fee should be uniform for all age groups regardless if the field is lit or unlit while in use. There should not be a tiered hourly field fee applied just because we are an adult group. Our players are also the parents of the players in the various youth leagues. Charging a higher hourly field fee to adults (19 and above) and not passing those same higher hourly fees onto the other younger age groups below 19 is discriminatory and arbitrary. By the nature of the adult age groups, typically, the adult baseball games are scheduled at night during the week due to the normal workweek schedule. Unless charging a higher hourly fee to the adult groups gives them a higher priority in the scheduling of regional baseball field permits, again it appears to be discriminatory.

As a league we have already seen what a major increase in fees will do to player participation. At one point we had a seven-team division in the District of Columbia. When that division began the District was willing to discount their hourly fees for the use of their fields. Approximately 4 years ago the District was no longer willing to offer the discount to the league and as a result the division collapsed with the players not being able to afford the necessary increase.

We would like to suggest the county look at other ways of cutting their costs of maintaining the fields. Fairfax County, who charges a $5.50 per player fee, requires the teams to help maintain their fields. Our players fill in holes, rake and drag the fields and cover the pitchers mound and batting area after each game. Additionally, when a baseball coach needs help at the field for improvements our players are more than willing to step up and help.

In closing, our solution is for our organization to be given the option to provide the field maintenance on the regional park baseball fields where we play our games. We are proposing a tiered hourly field fee, albeit a much lower hourly field fee, than what it is being proposed today. Also please keep in mind that during the last 20 years in which our organization has been providing adult baseball for our Montgomery County player residents, there has not been any direct cost in which the county has incurred. We have saved the county a tremendous amount of money over the years by providing adult baseball as a service to our Montgomery County player residents. In return, we are asking for the County to work with us in a public private partnership so that we can accomplish your goals as an agency and continue our mission as a service provider with the outcome being a win-win for all involved.

Respectfully,

Larry Lombardi
League President
DCMSBL/MABL

Roger Stanley
League Treasurer
DCMSBL/MABL

COMMUNITY EXHIBIT
RECEIVED BY MCPB
DATE: 9/15/08
ITEM NO. 2
EXHIBIT NO. 4

DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Gabriel Albornoz
Acting Director

September 15, 2008

Mr. Royce Hanson
Planning Board Chairman
Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Hanson:

The Montgomery County Department of Recreation has had an opportunity to review the Park's Department's "Proposal for the Implementation of Hourly Athletic Field Fees".

While the county wrestles with the current budget crisis, agencies like ours are continually faced with the challenge of "reinventing" our budgets so that we can continue to provide our customers with the level of service that they are used to and have come to expect from us. Our staff has met with Montgomery parks staff several times over the last week to discuss the impact that raising the fees would have on the department. It was acknowledged that everyone has budget increases, but that by changing the payment policies, we could come to an agreement on the fee structure that fits within the fiscal restraints of both agencies and provides Parks with the financial resources it requires to maintain quality and safe park facilities for our county residents.

We recommend a mutually beneficial agreement that would save costs by eliminating the staff costs that are associated with the tasks of reviewing the rain cancellations, revisions etc.

The proposal is a flat fee agreement based on a three year average historical use would be used, as opposed to paying fees based on hourly usage. This flat fee agreement would be established with the consideration that the fee for each partner government agency could be adjusted on mutually agreed basis. For example if Montgomery Parks required a fee increase due to direct operational cost such as fertilizer , fuel, personnel costs that they could within the future fiscal impact windows, request the fee increase to allow for Recreation to include the increase as part of the maximum agency request ceiling, and be included in their next budget request and approval process. If Recreation experienced a dramatic reduction in amount of field usage they could adjust the fee downward to better reflect their total usage.

It was recommended that if Parks costs go up, there would be a reasonable window of time in which they could ask for more funds. Recreation Department fees would be adjusted based on the percentage of loss or growth of participation.

We feel that this agreement will allow Parks to keep up with the ever-increasing cost of utilities and field maintenance, and allow Recreation to continue to permit the fields within our budget. We appreciate the Parks Department's flexibility in working with our staff on this issue that will allow both Departments to continue to best serve our Montgomery County residents. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Albornoz
Director