



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

MCPB  
Agenda Item #3  
April 19, 2012

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 19, 2012

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board/Parks Commission

**VIA:** Mary R. Bradford, Director of Parks *Mary R. Bradford*  
Mike Riley, Deputy Director of Parks *M*

**FROM:** Kate Stookey, Chief, Public Affairs & Community Partnerships Division *Kate Stookey*

**SUBJECT:** Maryland Soccer Foundation, Inc. (MSF) SoccerPlex 2011 Annual Report

**Staff Recommendation:** Accept the MSF Year End Report as submitted.

**Please note:** The MSF 2001-2012 Income Statement contained in the attached Year End Report and the Audited Financial report both contain confidential financial information that is considered proprietary and will not be distributed to the public. This information has been reviewed and accepted by the M-NCPPC Secretary-Treasurer. **Staff recommends any discussion of proprietary financial information be conducted in closed session.**

**Background**

The MSF has a forty year lease with the M-NCPPC to manage and maintain the SoccerPlex, located in South Germantown Recreational Park. The SoccerPlex is a 162-acre soccer facility consisting of 21 outdoor soccer fields, one championship tournament stadium field with stadium seating, one indoor multi-purpose facility, and three artificial turf fields with lights. The SoccerPlex is one of the M-NCPPC's Public-Private Partnership projects, originally developed in 2000 with a total initial project development cost of \$28,081,000 (of which 39% was public funding and 61% private funding). **Since 2000, the MSF has invested an additional \$7,200,000 in general capital improvements, creation of three turf fields, and stadium improvements.**

**As part of the MSF's amended lease agreement terms, and per the M-NCPPC's adopted 2007 Public Private Partnership policy guidelines, the MSF is required to provide the Montgomery County Planning Board with an annual report** consisting of: the programmatic benefits and services offered to the public during the year; a financial statement describing their operating and capital budget expenditures, income and reserve funding management during the year; the identification of any new initiatives; any updates to their business plan; information on the Soccer Association of Montgomery County (SAM); and community outreach and events.



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

**Staff Assessment of SoccerPlex Activity During 2011**

The SoccerPlex continues to be a successful example of the benefits public-private partnerships can provide to the community. The MSF's business acumen, innovative programming, and ongoing commitment to growing the sport of soccer have created a world class soccer venue that draws more than 1.5 million visitors every year. We continue to enjoy a strong collaborative relationship with MSF and look forward to working with them on new initiatives in the future.

**FY2011-2012 Activity Report**

Attached is the Executive Summary from the MSF's submitted 2011 End-of-Year Report. This summary provides more detailed information on the opportunities and challenges faced by MSF over the past year.

## **Executive Summary FY 2011 and 2012**

Except for battling weather extremes, an earthquake, hurricane, and tropical storm 2011 was a relatively calm year of positive growth and activity. However, since 80% of our activity occurs outdoors, weather can have a significant impact.

Since the Planning Board has two new members since my last report, I wanted to provide a brief historic overview of the SoccerPlex and Foundation:

### **Maryland Soccer Foundation (MSF) Milestones**

- MSF incorporated as a 501 (c)3 non-profit in October 1997
- Original lease with MNCPPC signed June 1999
- Maryland SoccerPlex opens in October 2000
- Discovery Sports Center opens in December 2000
- Soccer Association of Montgomery (SAM) youth soccer club launches in July 2005.
- 19 grass fields opened in 2000; added three lighted turf fields in 2008
- Stadium improved in 2009
- Full time staff of 15, including seven dedicated to Turf Management
- 650,000 visitors each year
- 50,000 out of town visitors; 15,000 hotel room nights sold annually
- 10,000 matches played each year
- Eight soccer events and five lacrosse events generate \$12 million in positive economic impact each year.
- 82% of business is soccer; 8% lacrosse; 5% basketball

### **Turf Management**

Mother Nature flexed her power in 2011 with the following:

- Wet, cool spring
- Highest average temperatures ever for the month of July
- Hurricane Irene in August
- Tropical Storm Lee in September
- Wettest fall on record
- 2" of snow the last weekend in October
- Lowest average temperature ever for the month of October
  - 1 day over 80; 2010 had 11 days over 90 in October

As a result we cancelled more local soccer league days in the fall than ever before. The good news is we were able to reschedule all games except the games lost on the last weekend in October due to snow.

### **Field of the Year**

In spite of the challenging weather conditions that caused our turf management staff to work long hours and come up with creative solutions, our stadium field was awarded the coveted "Field of the Year" award for the Schools and Parks category by the Sports Turf Managers Association. This is a national award of which we are very proud. We had to run considerably more activity than in the past on the

stadium in the fall of 2011 putting our turf management practices to the test. Somehow that makes the success even sweeter.

#### **Lightning Detection**

Safety of our patrons during inclement weather, especially thunderstorms, is a top priority. and installed a lightning detection system in 2008 but found that over time the reliability of the system became inconsistent. In 2011 we replaced the system with a new Weatherbug Weather Station that provides an enhanced lightning sensor and alert system and a full weather station that measures conditions, precipitation, wind etc at the SoccerPlex, as well as providing text alerts for predicted inclement weather. An added benefit is that Weatherbug is headquartered in Germantown and when we anticipate a weather issue, we receive email forecasts specifically for the SoccerPlex from their chief meteorologist multiple times a day.

#### **Green Initiative**

In 2011 we replaced and upgraded the lighting in the Discovery Sports Center arena with new energy efficient lighting. The new lighting should result in an estimated 30% reduction in our utility expense. In addition we applied for and received a grant from the State of Maryland for half of the cost.

#### **SAM**

The Soccer Association of Montgomery (SAM) is MSF's in-house soccer club. The SAM recreation program was launched in 2005 and currently has just over 2,000 players, 81% of whom are from the Up County (Gaithersburg-Clarksburg). Demographically 60% of the players are boys and 40% are girls. SAM's development program for 3-6 year olds supports another 2,000 players annually. SAM is an important part of MSF's future growth strategy.

#### **New Event**

This Halloween season, Dean Turnbull and I partnered with a local "haunt production" group to develop and promote the Nightmare Screamplex in the park. South Germantown is a natural location for this type of activity. Our arrangement with the production company was that Parks and MSF would receive 10% each of the gross admissions revenue. Unfortunately the weather adversely affected the event and the revenue was lower than anticipated however we both netted a little over \$10,000. The event brought new folks into the park and the feedback was very positive.

#### **Lacrosse**

Local youth lacrosse continues to grow in Montgomery County. In fact the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association states that lacrosse is the fastest growing sport in the nation. We continue to host two very large girl's lacrosse tournaments and three smaller boy's lacrosse events during the summer. In 2011 we launched a girl's lacrosse league, the Washington Area Lacrosse League (WALL) that will play in the spring and fall seasons. In 2012 we will expand the league and add another girl's tournament in June.

#### **ACC Men's Soccer Championships**

The Maryland SoccerPlex will host the ACC Men's Soccer Championships November 9-11, 2012. The ACC tournament is the most prestigious soccer event in the country with 3-5 of the ACC teams consistently ranked in the top 10 in the country. We hosted the event in 2006 and it drew the largest crowds we've had in our stadium. We are honored to be selected to host it.

**Basketball**

Our original business plan anticipated that basketball would be a major sport for our facility. However, until this year basketball has not been a significant contributor. We have never been able to get any traction with youth or adult leagues however with eight courts under one roof, we have promoted our facility for tournaments and camps. And that part of the business is beginning to grow. We have six weekend tournaments and three “celebrity” summer camps (Mark Turgeon, Greivas Vasquez and Roger Mason).

**Field Development**

In 2011 to accommodate growing summertime activity, we converted three of our bluegrass fields and the Commission’s field 24 to Bermuda grass. The mix of fields is currently: 12 bluegrass, seven Bermuda, and three synthetic turf fields. Four of the 22 fields are lighted.

As we look to the future there are two issues we will need to address: reducing closures due to significant precipitation and adding capacity to meet growing demand. With new technology in field development there are many options to address rainouts and our turf management staff will develop a comprehensive recommendation in the first quarter.

Increasing capacity can be achieved by lighting additional fields, converting fields to either turf or sand based construction or building the final two soccer fields (fields 1 and 2) in the Park. We will be analyzing all of these options in the first half of 2012.

In ten years the SoccerPlex has evolved from a soccer only athletic venue to a multi-sport, multi-activity community asset. By diversifying our activity we have become more sustainable and strengthened our connections to our local community. We offer community events that enable more people in Montgomery County to enjoy this amazing Park of which we are proud to be a part.

####