



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

MCPB May 12, 2016
Agenda Item 7

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 2, 2016

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board/Parks Commission

VIA: Mike Riley, Director of Parks *MR*
Mitra Pedoeem, Deputy Director, Administration *Mitra Pedoeem*
Kristi Williams, Chief, Public Affairs & Community Partnerships Division *KW*

FROM: David Tobin, Manager, Community Partnerships *DT*
Doug Ludwig, Chief, Northern Region
Neil Hollingshead, Park Manager, South Germantown Recreational Park

SUBJECT: Maryland Soccer Foundation, Inc. (MSF) SoccerPlex 2015 Annual Report

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

Please Note: The MSF financial statements contained in the included Year End Reports 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 Discovery 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.

Staff Assessment of SoccerPlex Activity During 2015

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.

FY-2015 Activity Reports

Attached is the Executive Summary from the MSF's submitted 2015 End-of-Year Report. This summary provides more detailed information on the opportunities and challenges faced by the MSF over the past year.

Executive Summary 2015/2016

2015

This year saw the following:

- 15th Anniversary
- Pesticide Legislation
- Field Development
- Refinancing of Loan
- OktoberPlex
- DED Award
- Player Safety
- Bermuda Fields

15th Anniversary

We passed a major milestone in 2015 with fifteen years of operating the SoccerPlex. It is hard to believe and incredibly gratifying at the same time. The true measure of success is the numbers of players, coaches and families who have enjoyed the facility over the past fifteen years.

There are many lessons learned along the way: ample parking and permanent restrooms are almost as important as high quality fields; frost delays in October are painful; you can never over-communicate; you need to manage expectations; Bermuda fields are not dead in the spring, just dormant; kids love to play soccer in the snow (parents don't like to watch kids play soccer in the snow); the SoccerPlex is very windy; the Weatherbug lightning detection system was one of our best investments in player safety; when young players play a match on the stadium they feel like they are in the World Cup; maintaining high quality soccer fields is complex science; each field is a little different, just like children; kids thrive in positive environments and parents need to remember, it's just a game.

Here's to the next fifteen.

Pesticide Legislation

The County Council passed Bill 52-14 with the goal to reduce pesticide use on lawns in the County. Playing fields were provided an exemption for which we are relieved. As we all seek to reduce our need for pesticides, we are optimistic that the industry will develop alternatives. However those options do not exist at this time. We continue to work to improve the health of the plant and research soil inputs to aid in plant health to reduce pesticides. It will take time.

Field Development

Development of our final two fields (Fields 1&2) began on August 18. Field 2 which required the greatest amount of cut and fill grade work, was seeded in mid-October; field 1 was seeded in late October/early November. We were blessed with unseasonably warm weather this fall that enabled the fields to grow in to about 85%. And it provided time to construct the parking lots and pathways. In the spring we will overseed the fields with bluegrass and we plan to have them ready for play on Memorial Day weekend 2016. The fields will provide capacity for future growth and the ability to rest fields during the seasons that need renovation and improvement. We have now completed the planned 24-field SoccerPlex.

Loan Refinance

We were able to take advantage of the positive rate environment and we refinanced the balance of our loan in June, 2015 at a lower fixed rate for the remainder of the term.

OktoberPlex

Germantown for many years held an OktoberFest event. In 2014 it was held in Clarksburg. In 2015 there was not an organizing committee so in early September we decided to host the OktoberPlex, and Oktoberfest at the SoccerPlex. We held it in conjunction with our Discovery Cup tournament. The event attracted about 1,000 visitors. Although the numbers were lower than expected we will plan to hold it again next year on a different weekend in October. Germantown needs more community events and this event is a long held tradition so we want to revive it.

Small Business Hospitality Company of the Year

Montgomery County's Department of Economic Development awarded MSF with the Hospitality Company of the Year based on the economic impact we provide the County from our tournaments.

Player Safety

Player safety continues to be a top priority for us and other organizations working with youth players. Concussion safety and education, sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), background checks, safe playing surfaces are the focus. Coaches, parents and players are provided information on concussion and SCA symptoms and procedures in the event of an occurrence. All coaches and assistant coaches must pass a background check.

Bermuda Fields

2014, with its cooler than expected spring and fall, made growing Bermuda grass a challenge. 2015 on the other hand was ideal weather with a long hot summer. Our Bermuda fields bounced back to 100% coverage. We have learned that covering the fields over the winter with turf blankets makes a significant impact on how quickly they respond in the spring.

2016

Fields 1 & 2

The planned opening date is Memorial Day. The fields have an innovative drain system that we will evaluate to determine if it would be beneficial to install in all fields over 2-3 years. Our goal is to be able to play on the fields after an inch of rain in 24 hours.

National Turf Grass Federation Partnership

A bit of trivia: turf grass is the number one crop in Maryland as well as the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. As of a 2005 survey, 1.1 million acres of turf grass was maintained in the state, covering 18% of the total land area. NTF is part of USDA and they are located at the National Arboretum. Two years ago they created and exhibit called Grass Roots, a 1.3 acre outdoor exhibit that educates and informs the public on the benefits and uses of grasses for turf, landscapes and food crops. There is information on fertilization, irrigation, synthetic vs natural sports turf, cool season vs warm season grasses and a history of lawns. NTF applied for and received a grant from USDA to create Grass Roots at the SoccerPlex. We expect it to open in August 2016.

Germantown Alliance 2.0

The Germantown Alliance, a community group comprised of businesses, non-profits, schools, fire and rescue, faith based organizations and government representatives was re-launched. The goal is to connect with citizens on issues, provide a clearinghouse for information and events and to encourage community involvement. The first meeting was in September and more than 45 people attended. The meetings are held monthly and the location rotates around different venues in Germantown so that people become familiar with the community. We are involved in the re-launch and hope that it grows and becomes a relevant community voice.

Partnership with Black Rock Center for the Arts

In 2016 we will partner on a summer camp, Sports in the Arts Camp. The camp will include a half day of soccer followed by a half day of an arts program conducted by Black Rock. In addition we are hoping to host a "Cirque de Soleil" type event at the Discovery Sports Center in partnership with Black Rock.

Soccer/Tennis Camp

In 2014 we partnered with the TennisPlex to offer a summer camp that would have soccer in the morning and tennis in the afternoon. We only offered it on two weeks and it was very well received. Last year we expanded to four weeks and participation grew so in 2016 we will offer eight weeks of the camp.

SAM

Our in-house soccer program, SAM, continues to grow. SAM has approximately 3,800 players each season in all age groups. SAM is 60% boys and 40% girls. We continue to explore ways to encourage more girls, particularly Latina girls, to participate in soccer. We provided \$50,000 in financial aid to enable more children to play. US Soccer announced some significant sweeping changes to youth development standards that we are evaluating to determine their benefit to our players as well as their impact to the SoccerPlex from an operations standpoint.

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