



MCPB
Item No: 3

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To: Montgomery County Planning Board

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Subject: SYNTHETIC TURF CANDIDATE FIELD SITE SELECTION PROCESS AND
CRITERIA, PUBLIC OUTREACH STRATEGY

Staff Recommendation

The purpose of this memorandum is to secure the guidance and approval of the Montgomery County Planning Board on the following points as they pertain to the development of synthetic turf athletic fields in Montgomery County:

- Site Selection Process,
- Criteria, and
- Public Outreach Strategy.

Background

The proposed FY07-12 CIP includes funding for 2 or 3 synthetic turf fields. During the FY06 Operating Budget sessions the PHED committee asked the Department to develop site selection criteria and seek public input to convert existing natural surface fields to synthetic turf. We are seeking the Board's guidance in using these criteria for selecting candidate sites and to begin seeking public input in the selection of fields to convert to synthetic turf.

The 2005 Land Preservation and Recreation Plan identifies the need for additional soccer fields. Converting natural surface fields to synthetic turf fields will allow

additional number of games on the selected fields. The advantages of installing synthetic turf has both customer and staff related implications as listed below:

- Increase length of season,
- Reduce field down time due to wet weather,
- Eliminate the need for multiple turf renovations over the life of the field,
- Reduce amount of time in moving teams for seasonal field renovations,
- Reduce number of maintenance requirements needed verses a natural surface field,
- Reduce number of last minute schedule changes due to field conditions
- Reduce number of refunds and re-bookings and associated staff time, and
- Provide consistent playing surface for improved customer experience.

Selection Criteria Considerations

Staff has determined through Internet research, site visits to other jurisdictions and internal discussions, that in order to protect and capitalize on an investment of this magnitude certain field-related amenities must either already exist or be easily added. The presence of these field-related amenities served as selection criteria that were applied to a “universe” of potential sites. In developing these criteria, staff visited with Arlington County Park and Recreation staff on two occasions. Staff also picked up valuable guidance at a presentation by Douglas County, Colorado at the 2004 National Recreation and Parks Association National Conference.

Field Lighting

- Field should currently be lighted or be able to be lighted prior to installation of synthetic turf.

Security

- Field should currently be secured (fenced) or able to be secured.
- Have ability to control access to the field.

Parking

- Adequate on site parking should be currently available or easily expandable.
- Minimal number of other facilities competing for parking during ballfield use

Restrooms

- Restroom facilities should be present or be able to be constructed.

Spectator seating

- Spectator seating area should be currently available or easily added. Seating should be at a low number of rows to prevent noise drift.

Other amenities – Present or easily added

- Paved and lighted internal circulation between field and parking areas.

Candidate Sites

Based on the selection criteria staff believes the fields listed below are the best candidates, at this time, for the installation of synthetic turf. These sites are listed in alphabetical order. They are not in priority order and may not represent all potential candidates.

- Blair High School, stadium field
- Blake High School, track field
- Fairland Recreational Park, soccer field #5
- Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park, football field #4
- Ridge Road Recreational Park, soccer field #4

Evaluation Criteria

Staff have proposed the following criteria to facilitate ranking of the five sites. Public input will also be an important factor in this process.

Environmental impact

- Existing field located outside environmentally sensitive areas.
- Adequate space for storm water management facilities outside of sensitive areas.

Impact on neighboring communities

- Existing buffering between field and homes will remain the same.

Size of the field

- Field will accommodate multiple sports.
- Field will accommodate differing levels of play – Youth and/or Adult.

Existing Condition of Turf

- Has the field required excessive maintenance efforts to keep it in playable condition?
- Has the field required multiple major renovations work to keep it in playable condition?

Dependable, Regular, Predictable and Consistent Availability for Community Use

- Is the field available for uninhibited community use?

Public Outreach Strategy

The Public Outreach Strategy is to have the two regional Recreation Advisory Boards host public meetings as an agenda item at their regular monthly meeting. For the public's convenience, there will be two meetings scheduled: one with the Eastern Area Advisory Board covering the lower county; and one with the Up-County Recreational Advisory Board covering the upper-county. The meetings are scheduled for the month of March. Community notification for the two Recreation Advisory Board meetings will consist of a general press release. Direct mail notification of candidate field permitted users and candidate fields adjacent homeowners associations will also be included.

After the Recreation Advisory Board meetings and evaluating the public comments on the criteria and candidate sites, staff will rank the candidate sites and bring a recommendation to the Planning Board for approval of the two sites to be converted to artificial turf.