



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

October 20, 2008

MCPB Agenda Item # 11
October 23, 2008

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Mary Bradford, Director

FROM: Terry H. Brooks, Chairman
Public/Private Partnership Committee

SUBJECT: SoccerPlex Championship Stadium Field Bleacher Seating Expansion Request

Staff Recommendation: Approval with Conditions

Introduction

On October 1, 2008, the Commission received a letter from the Executive Director of the Maryland Soccer Foundation, Inc. (MSF) announcing that in the Spring of 2009, the Washington Freedom of the new Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) League will call the Maryland SoccerPlex Stadium their home field. (See Attachment #1)

In addition to playing their home games at the stadium, the team will also practice at the SoccerPlex and the team's executive offices are now located in the Discovery Sports Center. The MSF is also requesting the Commission's permission to:

1. Expand the permanent bleacher seating capacity around the SoccerPlex Championship Field from the current level of 3,200 to 5,600;
2. Allow the MSF the flexibility to add up to 1,000 temporary bleacher seats when attendance levels reach that level;
3. Develop a new permanent restroom facility to support the additional seating capacity;
4. Develop a permanent press box;

5. Develop a permanent ticket booth for selling tickets on game days; and
6. Allow the MSF to construct a six foot high fence surrounding the perimeter of the championship field stadium area to control access.

The MSF's approved and amended 2006 ground lease with the Commission allows the MSF to build up to 7,500 bleacher seats at the SoccerPlex Championship Field. (See SoccerPlex Site Plan Attachment #2)

Background

The Maryland Soccer Foundation, Inc. (MSF) has a forty year lease with the Commission to manage the SoccerPlex located in South Germantown Recreational Park in Germantown, Maryland. The SoccerPlex is a 162 acre soccer facility consisting of 22 soccer fields (19 outdoor grass fields, one championship tournament stadium field with 3,200 bleacher-type seats), one indoor 64,000 sf multi-purpose facility and three (3) new, artificial turf fields with lights. The SoccerPlex is one of the Commission's Public/Private Partnership projects, which was developed in 2000 with a total initial project development cost of \$28,081,000 (\$17,110,000 in private funding and \$10,971,000 in public funding).

As part of the MSF's approved and Amended and Restated Ground Lease (August 7, 2006 lease agreement provisions):

"Section 2. Definitions:

(h) "Capital Improvements" means the Indoor Multi-Purpose Facility and related improvements and the following improvements, only, subject to and in accordance with the approval and permitting processes, including any applicable County CIP processes and the issuance of a park permit, established for the installation of such improvements in Montgomery County on publically owned land. Prior to issuance of the park permit, at the sole discretion of the Commission, the Commission may require the Foundation to appear before the Planning Board at a public hearing to present plans for such improvements:

(2) The installation of additional bleacher seats around the Championship Field so that the total number of bleacher seats around the Championship Field is up to 7,500, but in no event more than the maximum number allowable under the Traffic Standards;"

Staff Review & Evaluation of the MSF Request

Staff has reviewed the MSF's approved ground lease provisions and found the request in compliance with their ground lease provisions, including the requirements of the Traffic and Parking Management Plan (T&PMP) for the South Germantown Recreational Park.

The T&PMP was developed as part of the original master plan for the park. Compliance with the T&PMP was also made a lease requirement condition for each ground lease tenant (including the MSF) in order to control and manage all of the traffic patterns and all the required ancillary parking support needed to support all of the recreational activities within the park.

Each tenant within the park is required to ensure that their respective uses and activities (individually and collectively) do not adversely affect the acceptable levels of service for all of

the roadways surrounding the park (including special events and soccer tournaments).

The T&PMP was developed as part of the original master plan for the park. Compliance with the T&PMP was also made a lease requirement condition for each ground lease tenant (including the MSF) in order to control and manage all of the traffic patterns and all the required ancillary parking support needed to support the recreational activities within the park.

The bleacher expansion is included in the site's master plan. The proposed bleacher expansion and event operations plans managed by the MSF are designed so that youth soccer activities and Freedom events will not occur at the same time. The transportation planning staff has found the expansion is in compliance and therefore consistent with the T&PMP. (See Attachment #3)

Project Funding and Development

The proposed expansion of the 6,400 bleacher seats at the SoccerPlex Championship Field and all of the related infrastructure improvements, currently estimated at approximately \$2.6 million, will be funded by the Washington Freedom owner.

The review and approval of all the details of the development project is covered under an addendum to the existing Development Agreement between the MSF and the Commission, which prescribes the process through which the MSF must abide by for the design, construction, construction management and inspection of all construction projects at the SoccerPlex.

Public Notice & Comments

The Commission provided a public meeting notice inviting the public to comment on the subject request via the Commission's web site on October 16, 2008.

Public comments are expected to be received prior to the Planning Board's review of the subject request.

Public Benefits

- A programmatically enhanced soccer complex within the Parks System that will become the home of a professional women's soccer team, which can serve as soccer role models for young girls (Montgomery County's Soccer Community has 25,000 youth participants; one half of whom are female);
- The establishment of a more highly visible SoccerPlex through televised Freedom matches in the soccer community both within and outside the immediate area;
- Increased revenue for the MSF by leasing the Discovery Sports Center and the expanded championship field stadium facility;
- Creating an opportunity for the MSF to bid on sporting events that previously were not within their reach such as the NCAA Soccer Championships; and

- Enhancing the financial health of the MSF in order for the SoccerPlex to continue to serve as the premiere soccer complex for the youth and general public in Montgomery County.

Development Agreement Amendment

The Maryland Soccer Foundation, Inc. requests the Planning Board's permission to allow them to construct a new restroom building, a new press box, a new entry gate structure, and a new 6' fence surrounding the championship field. All of the new SoccerPlex features must be captured in MSF's Development Agreement as an amendment to their existing development agreement.

Recommendation

Based upon all of the aforementioned finding, staff recommends the MSF request be approved subject to the approved terms and conditions of the approved Amended Ground Lease Agreement, Development Agreement, and Traffic Management and Parking Plan.

Staff recommends the MSF Development Agreement be amended to reflect the addition of the new bleacher seats, press box, entry gate, and 6' fence at the SoccerPlex Championship Field.



18031 Central Park Circle
Boys, MD 20841

T 301.528.1480 | F 301.540.4276

www.mdsoccerplex.org

October 1, 2008

Mr. Terry H. Brooks, Division Chief
Special Programs Division
The Maryland National Capital
Park & Planning Commission
Montgomery County Department of Parks
Suite 517
1400 Spring Street
Silver Spring, Md. 20910

Dear Terry,

The Maryland Soccer Foundation (MSF) is proud to announce that beginning in the spring of 2009, the Washington Freedom of the new Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) league will call the Maryland SoccerPlex stadium their home field. In addition to playing their home games at the stadium, the team will practice at the SoccerPlex and the team's executive offices are now located in the Discovery Sports Center.

In order to meet WPS field and stadium requirements, MSF is seeking approval for the following improvements:

- Expand permanent seating capacity from the current level of 3,200 to 5,600.
- The ability to add up to 1,000 temporary bleacher seats when attendance levels reach that level.
- Development of restroom facility to support the additional seating capacity.
- Development of a permanent press box.
- Development of a permanent ticket booth for selling tickets on game days.
- Installation of a six foot fence surrounding the perimeter of the stadium area to control access.

Ground Lease Provisions

In Section 2 (h) (2) "Capital Improvements" definitions in the Amended and Restated Ground Lease between MSF and the Commission dated July 2006 it is stated:

"Prior to issuance of the park permit, at the sole discretion of the Commission, the Commission may require the Foundation to appear before the Planning Board at a public hearing to present plans for such improvements:

(2) The installation of additional bleacher seats around the Championship Field so that the total number of bleacher seats around the Championship Field is up to 7,500, but in no event more than the maximum number allowable under the Traffic Standards."

Funding and Development

The expansion of the stadium, related amenities and infrastructure improvements will be funded by the Washington Freedom owner. The development project is covered under an addendum to the existing Development Agreement between MSF and the Commission.

About the Washington Freedom

In 2000, after the US Women's National Soccer team won the World Cup, the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) was formed to provide women the opportunity to play soccer at the professional level as men had been doing in Major League Soccer since 1996. The Washington Freedom was one of the founding teams and was fortunate to have two of the top US players Mia Hamm and Abby Wambach, on the team. At the time, RFK stadium in DC was their home field. Unfortunately in 2003 the WUSA ceased operations but the Washington Freedom continued to play in an amateur league to keep the interest in women's soccer alive until a new professional league emerged. The Freedom played their games at the SoccerPlex for the past five years and drew an average attendance of 1,000 to 1,500 spectators.

The Washington Freedom was originally and is now owned by John and Maureen Hendricks under Hendricks Investment Holdings, LLC.

Unlike DC United that draws attendance of up to 15,000 to 20,000, the recommended stadium size for women's professional soccer is 5,000 to 7,000. One of the challenges the team faced when playing at RFK was that in a 55,000 seat stadium, the arena always felt empty and there was no impetus to purchase season tickets, the lifeblood of a professional sports team.

The suburban location of the SoccerPlex and the expanded stadium are ideal for women's soccer.

Scheduling

The Washington Freedom's schedule will begin in April 2009. They are planning to play seven "home" games at the SoccerPlex. Their season is from April to August. Their games will be played on weekend evenings. From time to time they may play additional matches during their season or pre-season but those matches have yet to be scheduled. In future seasons, as the WPS adds teams the Freedom will have more home games.

Benefits to MSF and the Local Soccer Community

Montgomery County has a rich soccer history and a soccer community totaling 25,000 participants. Fifty percent of youth soccer players are female. DC United is one of MLS' most successful franchises. The passion for soccer in our community is significant.

During the WUSA, the Washington Freedom players were very involved in the community. They conducted clinics, camps and participated in charity events. They understand the importance of their responsibility as role models for young girls. They have supported the following: Germantown Children's Festival, Free Mother's Day Clinic, Free Father-Daughter Father's Day Soccer Clinic, Kicks Against Breast Cancer, Girls Can Play, free soccer clinic at Germantown Glory and player appearances at local festivals, soccer tournaments and more.

MSF will benefit from the expansion of the stadium and the addition of the Washington Freedom in several ways:

- Increased revenue from the lease of office space in the Discovery Sports Center; lease of the stadium for home matches at a fee that reflects a capacity admission event rather than a "field rental"; rental of field space for team training. The Freedom lease of the stadium adheres to the same fee structure applied to DC United matches held at the stadium.
- By increasing the size of the stadium MSF will have the opportunity to bid on sporting events that are not within our reach such as the NCAA Soccer Championships. DC United historically has played one or two matches at the SoccerPlex each year. With the expansion and the additional amenities they have expressed interest in holding more matches in the future.
- The expansion of the stadium including the press box, ticket booth and perimeter fencing will make the operation of a capacity event much easier to manage and control.
- And lastly, the Freedom matches will be televised and viewed more widely in the soccer community in and out of the immediate area. Although less tangible, the benefit of this exposure for MSF and Montgomery County is very positive.

Traffic Management

The SoccerPlex and South Germantown Park have held many large events since we opened in 2000. Most notable of these is Germantown Glory on July 4, the ACC Men's Soccer Championships, US Youth Soccer National Championships and DC United matches. Each of these events attracts 4,000 to 10,000 visitors. It should also be noted that every Saturday in the Spring and Fall approximately 5,000-6,000 visitors, players, and coaches come to the SoccerPlex for their youth soccer league games.

MSF and the Freedom benefit from the knowledge, experience and guidance of Park Police and their eight years of on site experience supporting SoccerPlex events. MSF in conjunction with Park Management and Park Police have developed and refined an effective traffic management protocol that has proved to be successful for these well attended events.

There are more than 2,000 parking spaces available at the SoccerPlex. The Freedom will engage a parking management service that is familiar with the facility to direct and maximize parking prior to the event and assist Park Police at the conclusion of the match. A nominal parking fee will be included in the ticket price but no fee will be collected on site so that cars can access a space without delay or interruption.

Experience shows that at the conclusion of a capacity event at the SoccerPlex it takes 45 minutes to direct every car out of the Park. It is not unusual for a sporting event to have traffic congestion following an event because everyone tends to leave at the same time. With this in mind and to set realistic expectations, attendees will be alerted that it may take up to 45 minutes to exit the Park after the match. In addition, the Freedom is being creative and exploring holding activities such as autograph sessions, interactive games and other activities that will help to stagger the exit of spectators from the Park and reduce the anticipated time for egress.

To manage traffic and parking, when the Freedom has a home game, MSF will schedule youth soccer matches so that they end by 5:00 p.m. The gates will open at 5:30 p.m. for the Freedom match that kicks off at 7:00 p.m. It is certainly our hope that a significant number of those players and their families will stay or return to watch the match.

Security

The protocol established by Park Police for capacity sporting events at the SoccerPlex is for the event organizer, the Freedom, to contract with a professional event staffing firm that is experienced with crowd management at sports stadiums. This group will act as the "first responder" in the stadium. Park Police will provide the number of officers necessary to oversee all cash

handling operations, provide a "presence" throughout the stadium and parking areas and support the staff in the event of an incident.

Medical Support

The WPS requires that the Freedom have an ambulance on site for each home game. In addition each team provides an athletic trainer. In addition, MSF has an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) and first aid station in the Discovery Sports Center should they be needed.

The Maryland Soccer Foundation views the addition of the Washington Freedom as a substantial revenue and image enhancement for the SoccerPlex. But the real beneficiaries are all those young girls who play soccer and want to achieve at the highest level. They will now see that with perseverance, dedication to excellence and hard work they too can realize their dreams.

We respectfully request the Planning Board's approval to expand the stadium seating and develop the necessary infrastructure to support professional soccer at the SoccerPlex.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Trish Heffelfinger
Executive Director

South Germantown Recreation Trails

Last Update: feb06

Length: 5+ miles hard surface trails

South Germantown Perimeter Trail 2.5 mi

Soccerplex Loop Trail 1.4 mi

To Hoyles Mill Conservation Park and north

Hoyles Mill Trail

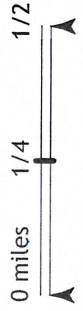
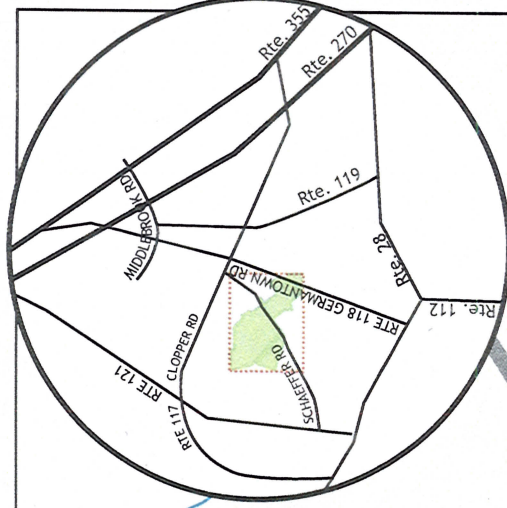
Indoor Swim Center

Heart Smart Trail 8 mi

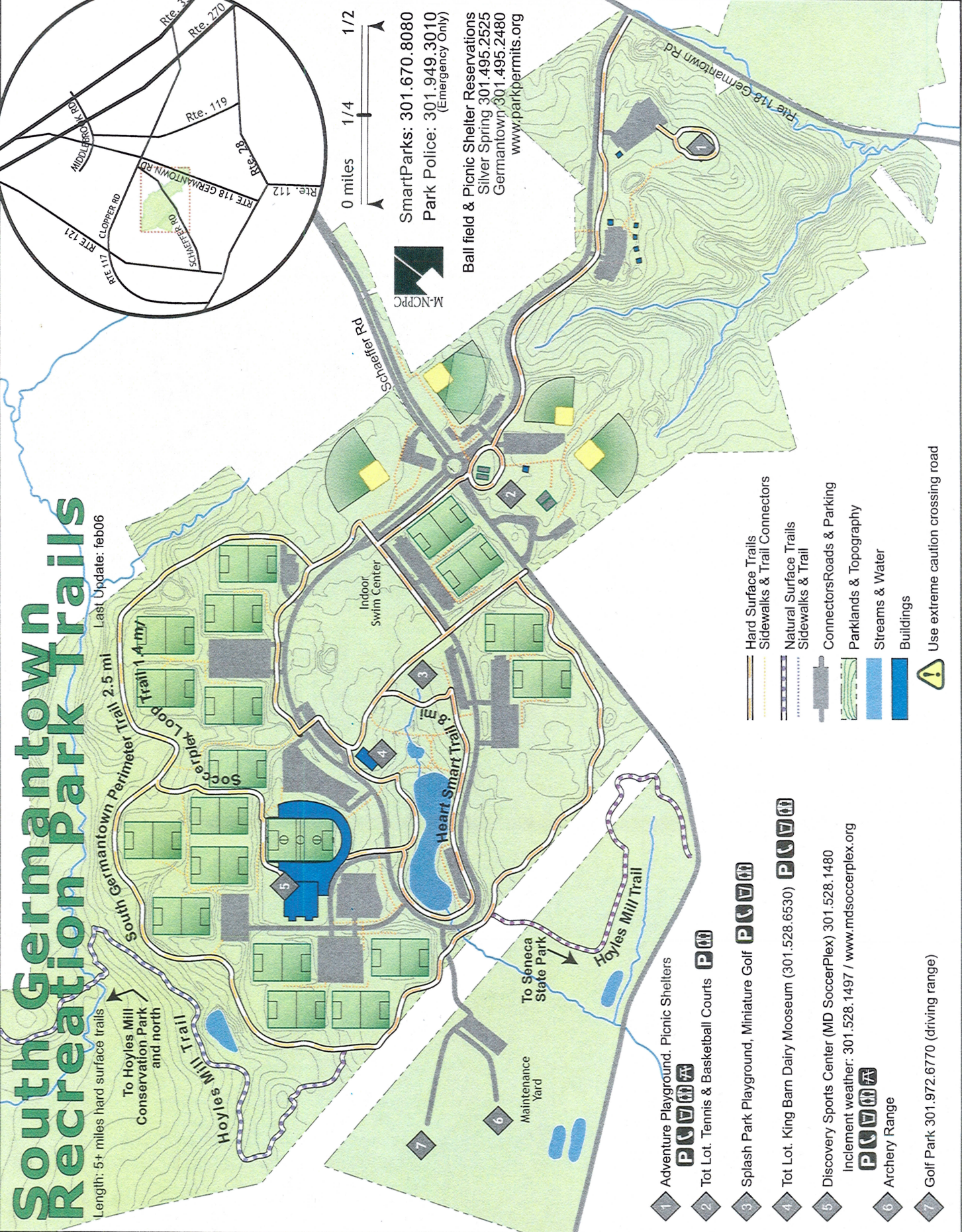
To Seneca State Park

Maintenance Yard

Hoyles Mill Trail



SmartParks: 301.670.8080
 Park Police: 301.949.3010 (Emergency Only)
 Ball field & Picnic Shelter Reservations
 Silver Spring 301.495.2525
 Germantown 301.495.2480
www.parkpermits.org



- 1 Adventure Playground, Picnic Shelters
- 2 Tot Lot, Tennis & Basketball Courts
- 3 Splash Park Playground, Miniature Golf
- 4 Tot Lot, King Barn Dairy Museum (301.528.6530)
- 5 Discovery Sports Center (MD SoccerPlex) 301.528.1480
 Incent weather: 301.528.1497 / www.mdsoccerplex.org
- 6 Archery Range
- 7 Golf Park 301.972.6770 (driving range)

- Hard Surface Trails
- Sidewalks & Trail Connectors
- Natural Surface Trails
- Sidewalks & Trail
- Connectors/Roads & Parking
- Parklands & Topography
- Streams & Water
- Buildings
- Use extreme caution crossing road



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

October 13, 2008

MEMORANDUM:

TO: Terry Brooks, Chief
Special Program Division
Department of Parks

VIA: Shahriar Etemadi, Supervisor *DKH for*
Transportation Planning Division

FROM: Ki H. Kim, Planner/Coordinator *KHK*
Transportation Planning Division

SUBJECT: SoccerPlex Bleacher Seating Expansion Proposal at
South Germantown Recreational Park

This memorandum provides transportation planning staff's assessment of the traffic issues associated with the proposed expansion of the bleacher seating at the Germantown SoccerPlex facility.

The applicant prepared the Traffic and Parking Management Plan (T&PMP) for the SoccerPlex in 1998 when the construction of the SoccerPlex at the South Germantown Recreational Park was proposed. The T&PMP outlined the guidelines for managing the traffic and parking associated with the daily usage of the proposed SoccerPlex for its maximum development capacity, including 7,400 seating capacity at the championship field.

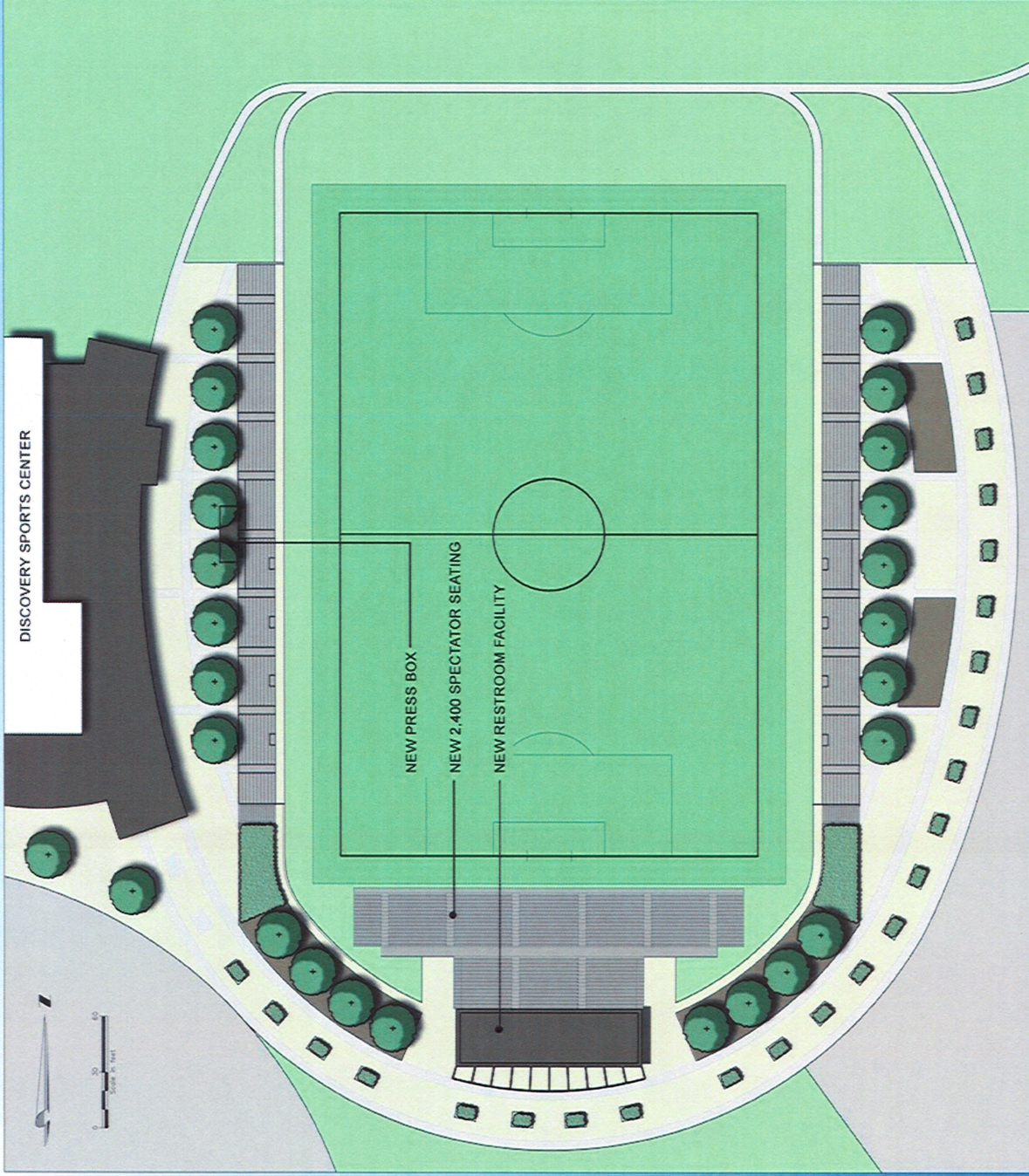
The SoccerPlex is being developed in phases and the T&PMP includes reviewing the transportation system as phases are completed. Since the SoccerPlex opening in 2000, staff has analyzed traffic conditions for major soccer tournaments and other special events using data collected during the events being monitored. Staff's analyses indicate that the local area roadway network provides adequate traffic capacity to accommodate the Germantown SoccerPlex activities.

The Maryland Soccer Foundation is proposing to expand the permanent bleacher seating capacity around the SoccerPlex championship field from the current level of 3,200 to 5,600, plus retain flexibility to add an additional 1,000 temporary bleacher seats if attendance levels reach that

level. This expansion is designed to support the Washington Freedom team in the Women's Professional Soccer league. The total number of seats allowed in this proposal is 6,600 seats, less than the 7,400 seats included in the SoccerPlex master plan.

To manage traffic and parking, when The Washington Freedom team has a home game, The Maryland Soccer Foundation will schedule youth soccer matches so that they end by 5:00 p.m., to allow youth soccer patrons to depart before the Freedom match begins. The gates will open at 5:30 p.m. for the Freedom match that kicks off at 7:00 p.m. Transportation planning staff reviewed the proposed seating expansion proposal and found that the proposal is consistent with the Traffic and Parking Management Plan. Staff concurs with the proposal with the understanding that the youth soccer activities and Freedom events not be allowed to occur at the same time.

KK:tc



MARYLAND SOCCERPLEX STADIUM UPGRADE



MARYLAND SOCCER FOUNDATION



