



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

MCPB May 11, 2017
Agenda Item 4

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 1, 2017

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board/Parks Commission

VIA: Mike Riley, Director of Parks 
Kristi Williams, Chief, Public Affairs & Community Partnerships Division 

FROM: David Tobin, Manager, Community Partnerships 
Neal Hollingshead, Park Manager, South Germantown Recreational Park

SUBJECT: Maryland Soccer Foundation, Inc. (MSF) SoccerPlex 2016 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 lease expires in 2039. The SoccerPlex is a 162-acre soccer facility consisting of 24 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 1999, 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 over \$7 million in general capital improvements, creation of three turf fields and stadium improvements.

As part of the MSF's amended lease agreement terms, the MSF provides 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 2016

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-2016 Activity Reports

Attached is the Executive Summary from the MSF's submitted 2016 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 2016/2017

2016

This year saw some "bucket list" items completed:

- Completing the Dream
- Teaching and Talking Turf
- Pesticide Update
- Our Role in Player Safety
- Partnerships
- SAM
- Great Year for Bermuda (fields that is)
- Washington Spirit

Completing the Dream

We completed the development of fields 1 & 2 to fulfill the initial vision of a 24-field soccer complex in Montgomery County. Some may remember our slogan back in 1999, "Let's Give our Kids a Complex!" It took a bit longer than originally thought but the end result is what matters. We began using the fields Memorial Day weekend and continued to program them through November. We ran 250 matches on the two fields collectively. Future plans include adding landscaping to the area especially near the homes bordering the fields.

Fields 1 & 2 have an innovative drainage system. If you're counting we have one sand based field (stadium), two sand capped Bermuda fields, two fields with sand grids (1&2), five fields with sand channels, and eight native soil fields. Our Director of Grounds mission is to gain consistency among all fields. We are currently evaluating the effectiveness of the drainage in fields 1 & 2 to determine if that should be installed in the remaining fields.

Teaching and Talking Turf

Who knew that turf is actually a crop? And that the history of lawns dates back to the Middle Ages? Those are a few of the nuggets people will learn when they visit the new "Grass Roots" exhibit at the SoccerPlex when it officially opens in the Spring of 2017. Grass Roots is a partnership between the Maryland Soccer Foundation and the National Arboretum. The goal is to educate people about the history and care of lawns. The exhibit sits on the lawn area on the south end of the Stadium. It is interactive and we hope will help encourage visitors to be good stewards of our land.

Each week we publish a newsy piece called *Turf Talk*. The content is developed by our Director of Grounds and edited by our Marketing Manager. It is a quick and hopefully fun read about all things related to field maintenance, seasonal tips for lawn care and burning questions like "why don't you let us warm up in the goal area?" and "what's the big deal about frost?" Our hope is that it is educational and entertaining.

Pesticide Update

One of the challenges in regulating pesticide use, besides being in the toughest place to grow grass, is that weather and soil conditions are never the same year to year. This year was no exception. We had a very wet spring and a very dry fall. Since September precipitation is 6" below where we should be. So

what does that mean? This summer we, and everyone else, fought a bumper crop of crabgrass and goose grass. So weeds, not disease were the issue. We had a mild year for disease with our first outbreak coming very late in the season. As a result our use of pesticides is down year over year. However we never know what the next year will hold.

Player Safety

This is an initiative in which we feel we should take a leadership role. US Soccer has recently communicated rules that they hope will reduce the incidence of concussions, including no heading the ball until 11 years old. During our tournaments we have Certified Athletic Trainers on site to be the first responders for injuries, especially concussions. Starting in September we have a Certified Athletic Trainer on site for every league weekend from September to November. We provide our participating users with the cell phone number at which to reach the trainer who is circulating in a golf cart. We will continue this practice next year.

Other safety initiatives include:

- Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) – there are six on site accessible to the public
- Weatherbug Lightning Warning System – in addition to our weather station on the roof of the Discovery Sports Center, we have a lightning detection system that warns patrons when lightning has occurred within 10 miles of the SoccerPlex. Everyone is to vacate the fields and wait for the “all clear”, three short horn blasts, to sound. This is one of our most effective safety initiatives.
- Continuous background checks – all of our SAM coaches and assistant coaches as well as our staff and instructors are required to submit to an annual background check. In the past these provided “a moment in time” check and only for Montgomery County. Last year the vendor we use offered a continuous background check on a national basis. We will be notified if someone in our database has been arrested anywhere in the country during the year.

Future initiatives will be focused on preventive care and information to reduce injury. We will partner with a health care organization to help educate coaches, players and parents about proper hydration, nutrition, fitness, pre and post-game preparation, and strength training.

Partnerships

This past summer we partnered with Black Rock Center for the Arts on two projects. The first was “Sports Meets the Arts” summer camp that was very popular. One of Black Rock’s instructors came to the SoccerPlex to conduct the camp that created art projects with a sports theme. Last summer the theme was the Olympics so the participants created medals and other art projects. We will offer it again this summer.

The second program was a free instructional acrobatic circus for kids. It was a lot of fun and we hope to offer it again next summer.

We continue to partner with the TennisPlex on a very popular soccer/tennis camp. It’s great for kids who want exposure to more than one sport.

We continue to partner with Holy Cross Germantown Hospital. One aspect of the partnership is HCGH is starting to offer fitness and health-related programs at the SoccerPlex. The response, in particular to the baby boomers in the area, was very positive as they said there were very few fitness related programs in this area. We hope to expand the relationship in 2017.

SAM

The Soccer Association of Montgomery (SAM), the in-house soccer club/league for the SoccerPlex continues to grow. Our recreation program hovers around 2,400 players and our select program is at a little over 1,000. Demographically we are at 65% boys and 35% girls. Geographic distribution is primarily Germantown, Gaithersburg and Clarksburg. The league is 45% Latino. We provide \$52,000 in financial aid.

In 2016, Leidos became our SAM jersey sponsor. Leidos is the jersey sponsor for DC United. Leidos took over a division on Lockheed Martin located in Gaithersburg and they were looking for a branding opportunity. It's an excellent relationship.

Sponsors

Current sponsors include: Holy Cross Germantown Hospital, Leidos, Demosphere, Dicks Sporting Goods, Firehouse Subs, Greene Turtle, Ben & Jerry's, River & Trail, Athletic House.

Bermuda Fields

Last year I mentioned that our Bermuda fields were struggling due to cooler, wetter weather. Well this year was perfect Bermuda growing weather. The long, hot and humid summer helped the Bermuda fields thrive. The tricky balancing act is the weather that the Bermuda fields love is just what causes the blue grass to struggle. We are very fortunate that we have an experienced grounds staff.

Washington Spirit

The professional women's soccer team that calls the SoccerPlex home had a great season. Attendance was up, averaging around 4,000 and the team competed in the League Championship, losing a 2-1 lead with 20 seconds to go. We expect them back next year. US Soccer is adding a girls Development Academy and the Washington Spirit will be supporting a group of teams under the Academy.

2017 Events and Projects

Stadium Field Renovation

Mid-year we will do a renovation of the stadium to remove some less than desirable grass, improve drainage and install Bermuda grass on the hillsides. This will be our only field development/improvement project in 2017.

Tournaments

We are in discussions with a lacrosse group to add a girl's lacrosse tournament at the end of June.

Feis

Each year we host Feis Culkin, an Irish Dance Competition, with close to 1,000 dancers. It's a wonderful event. In 2017 we may be adding a second Feis.

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