

Arlington County Sports Commission

Meeting Minutes

Date: 3/31/16

Time: 7:00pm

Place: Langston-Brown Community Center

Attending:

Craig Esherick, Chair	Ellen Killalea, Member
Josh Colman, Staff Liaison	Steve Severn, Member
Shirley Brothwell, Member	David Tornquist, Member
Justin Wilt (guest)	Bob Romano (Guest)

Agenda:

- I. **Approve Past Meeting Minutes**
- II. **American Legion- Field Use and Costs**
- III. **Field Fund Update**
- IV. **Batting Cage Update & Possible Field Fund Proposal**
- V. **Barcroft Field Conversion Decision**
- VI. **Follow up regarding meetings Craig attended**
- VII. **Skate Park Discussion**
- VIII. **Bathrooms at Yorktown (Appendix A)**
- IX. **FY17 Budget**
- X. **Projects and Themes for 2016**

Agenda Item

I. Approve Past Meeting Minutes (February 2016)

7:11-7:18pm

Action Items

II. American Legion- Field Use and Costs

7:18-7:31pm

Discussion, Consensus & Action Items

Review and motion to approve meeting minutes, seconded, approved.

Josh will post February minutes to the website.

Bob Romano from American Legion Baseball spoke before the commission. Came to Sports Commission to discuss the American Legion's field use and the cost for this field use. American Legion is a community group that does a lot for the local community- events, community service- it's more than just veterans. The main issue is with being charged \$165 every night to use Quincy Park.

Background on the team- The American Legion team is ages 16-18, all Arlington residents. It's one team that plays four nights a week (no practices). This is a select team, chosen from the best of the high school clubs.

Issue- The \$165 is too much for their post to afford. They are not a rich post, he finds it hard to understand why they are charged so much. He typically uses 24-26 dates throughout the season. He's come to commission looking for support for getting relief from the \$165.

Shirley- questions about whether he inquired about affiliate status?
Bob- applied and never heard anything back, doesn't really think they need affiliate status, but thinks they need a break off the \$165 price.

Shirley- is sympathetic to the issue, but believes the county is trying to move away from ad-hoc decisions in these types of situations. Believes affiliate status is a way to get this type of treatment.

Group discussion regarding affiliate status being on hold until after the field allocation process.

Bob- was told to wait for the field allocation process as well. His issue is not with getting fields (he is able to get the fields he needs), but with the money side. When he's listened to the field allocation side, he doesn't think it will really address his issue (most of the conversation addresses field play, practice times, etc.).

Group discussion regarding other solutions- affiliation with another group (like Babe Ruth), sponsorship opportunities and more. These are tough for American Legion since they are a national organization, all sponsorship needs to go through the national process.

Question regarding what amount he wants to pay for the field use?
Bob- Doesn't want to put a figure on it- would just like the county to take a look at this, look at what American Legion does- he'd be shocked if the board look at what the American Legion provided and still wanted to charge this. Even if the Sports Commission can't make a decision to support, if someone could go to the county board with support. He finds it hard to believe the county board would deny this.

Shirley- Senior Babe Ruth has a similar program in the summertime that ends up recruiting from the same pool of players- their organization pays nothing, while American Legion is paying a lot.

Bob- not saying he wants to pay nothing, just looking for a little compassion. Thanks the group for letting him come.

III. Field Fund Update

7:32-7:40pm

Josh provided each commission member a copy of the board approved Diamond Field Fund recommendations/procedures. Discussion regarding current funds available for Field Fund projects.

Craig- questions regarding the rectangle field projects- how was that moving forward? Justin W (guest)- General idea for rectangle fields was to do a big project (like turf replacement), rather than bits and pieces or smaller projects.

Shirley- recently had discussions with Jane regarding the field fund- wanted to know about a regular process. Josh- based on some of those discussions, Josh will prompt the Sports Commission twice a year to remind them about submitting project ideas (once in June/July timeframe and again in November timeframe.)

Discussion regarding directive last year that we should come up with projects- some people were designated from a few organizations- are we going back to that group? There was no leader, structure, etc.

Craig- we should appoint a subgroup of Sports Commission- they can come up with a group of people and work towards coming up with consensus projects.

Steve has volunteered to lead this- he will start putting together a group for these projects.

IV. Batting Cage Update & Possible Field Fund Proposal

7:41-7:52pm

Steve- two issues ongoing with batting cages- they were erected are were deemed unsafe, and there's a proposal going around for new cages.

Shirley- last conversation was with Ryan Amato from 2 weeks ago- there were three proposals (a small, medium, or large option) for

Barcroft- some involving a modification that might take the cages from three down to two.

Steve- argument in some of this- DPR should be paying for remediation of safety issues at Barcroft, but maybe we get new/updated cages with these problems.

Discussion regarding batting cages at Westover and if there are other cages that have similar problems.

Josh- current discussions have centered on Barcroft. Cages were inspected by safety group and solution was presented for spring season. Pads have been put up in all the cages at Barcroft. After spring season, DPR will evaluate effectiveness of pads. Groups have been encouraged to share any injury information- to date DPR hasn't received any. Discussions around new cages are a possible field fund project.

V. Barcroft Field Conversion Decision

7:53-8:03pm

Craig- is there a county prohibition about converting a grass field to an artificial surface? Justin- there could be reluctance to spend the money in a flood plain because there'd be potential for problems.

Discussion regarding what the issue is- is it about converting to artificial or mound conversion issue at Barcroft.

Shirley- this was an example of an issue that may resonate with other sports as well. User groups received an email from DPR that informed them of conversion of diamond fields. Previously, fields have flipped back and forth between 46/60 and 50/70. They have not had problems converting it to her knowledge. Received an email from DPR that a decision was made to convert the fields (one would stay 46/60, the other would stay 50/70) due to safety concerns, maintenance issues, coaches complaints- effective now. Groups were not pleased with this- reached out to Jane regarding what happened. If decisions like this are going to be made, groups want to be contacted and asked for feedback, have knowledge of the decision, and have a more reasonable timeframe. Interactions with DPR should be much more collaborative, much more involvement from community. It was a frustrating process, hopes that moving forward the process will be more transparent, reliable.

Discussion regarding why this happened, what was the intent, relationships with DPR/Sports Office.

Decision was put on hold, pending upcoming meeting between user groups and DPR.

VI. Follow up Regarding Meetings Craig Attended

Craig- Update on Public Space Master Plan- consultant outlined the results of the survey, unfortunately, it was not conducive to rectangular or diamond sports asking for more money. People are

8:04-8:18pm

primarily looking for trails, nature areas, playgrounds, and open space. Not much at the top of the list had to do with organized sports. Makes it tougher to advocate for more money however, there was good news with advocacy for the pools, in particular helping Long Bridge.

Craig- "testified" before the County Board & Manager on 3/30. Talked about some of the good things we've done- purchasing land (Benjamin Banner Park), Civic Federation Resolution that passed with Sports Commission support, Long Bridge #2, gymnastics facility, donation policy, Arlington Sports Foundation, Petition on need for more artificial surfaces. Doesn't know what will happen, but they listened. CIP process is happening, there are upcoming meetings- it's important to make sure we have a presence at the meetings.

Discussion regarding two fields at VA Highlands- there's a push among people in the apartment buildings for more free play on fields. Would one of those fields be a good field for artificial turf? Good news is that they are already lit, problem is that they remain locked (not used).

Discussion regarding other working groups (TJ, Four Mile Group). Shirley will be suggested representative for Four Mile Group.

Discussion regarding meeting with new County Auditor (Jessica Tucker). Talked about problems with construction plans and spending money on things that don't end up usable. Discussed getting user groups involved in the walkthrough process before construction companies are paid- get users to figure out if we can play safely. Discussion regarding schools use of facilities without payment- Greenbrier as an example (APS budget not used for construction, yet they use the field all the time)- highlighted issues between APS and DPR. Auditor will be putting up a "Suggest an Audit" page on the county website to try to find topics.

General discussion regarding APS and DPR and issues of field use, maintenance, etc. Need to get APS and DPR together on these items.

VII. Skate Park Discussion

Craig- \$288,000 already in the budget- potentially difference between that and the \$2 million is the construction cost.

8:19-8:22pm

Discussion regarding \$288,000 already budgeted for.

VIII. Bathrooms at Yorktown

Discussion continued at end of meeting- notes are under Item X.
Discussion deferred until April meeting.

IX. FY17 Budget	Budget information on website- if requested, presentation on budget from DPR to commission chairs can be shared (same information is available online).
8:23-8:24pm	
X. Projects & Themes/General Update	General discussion regarding any field they'd like to turn into synthetic turf.
8:24-8:44pm	<p>Steve- High View Park should be artificial- could serve both diamond and rectangular sports. Already has lights. It's definitely a youth field- outfield with no fence.</p> <p>Craig- any ideas on how neighborhood would view that? CIP is up and we have an opportunity to talk about it. Can we leverage a little field fund money with the CIP?</p> <p>Shirley- would want to know where all the artificial turf fields are. What areas are without? Lights are very relevant to this discussion.</p> <p>Craig- many more in South Arlington compared to North Arlington.</p> <p>Justin- discussion regarding Kenmore- new field space at the front field (could be a multi-sport field). School uses the field a ton- they'd be thrilled if they had more space. It'd be a much bigger investment.</p> <p>Discussion regarding Quincy Park (how it's currently used, parking, lights, etc.).</p> <p>Discussion regarding letter Christian Dorsey sent regarding artificial turf petition. David- There are questions he raised about cost effectiveness and return on investment of turf fields.</p> <p>Justin/Group- There's a turf petition being sent around. Sent by group of parents- says county should not do turf fields because of rubber crumbles. It's becoming a national movement.</p> <p>Follow up discussion on Skate Park: David- What is the alternative to the \$1.75 million? Where would the money come from? What else could it be used for?</p> <p>Steve- if you are approving the \$288,000 for design, you're thinking about the next step already. When does that come in?</p> <p>Shirley- doesn't dispute group needs to be taken care of, however, not a huge group of users. Sports groups can't get DPR to spend 1.75 million on anything. It's inconsistent- how did that project get moving forward so quickly.</p>

Discussion regarding cost recovery (or lack of) for skate park. David- not cost recovery to everything- we don't ask that with playgrounds as an example.

Questions regarding raising funds or idea of the group raising funds. What would the space be if it wasn't a skate park? What would you put there instead? Are there ways for skate group to organize to a higher degree?

Adjournment at 8:44pm

Next meeting will be April 28 at Langston Brown Community Center, Room 109

Christian Dorsey, County Board Liaison

Attest:

Josh Colman

Josh Colman, Staff Liaison