

Commission Member Reports

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Aquatics Committee- Janet Eichers | 1 |
| Diamond Field Fund Committee- Steve Severn | 2 |
| Madison Manor- Sherry Kohan | 5 |
| Out of School Time- Tricia Trapanese | 6 |
| JFAC Buck Property Sub-Committee- Jessica Paska..... | 8 |
| POPS- Justin Wilt..... | 9 |

Aquatics Committee- Janet Eichers

Member report for Aquatics Committee.

The Committee welcomed 2 new members this Fall:

- Ron Kampeas
- Kristi Sawert

The Committee has had several discussions about the new high school plans in the County. The Committee developed and voted on a position WRT a swimming pool at any new high school: if the County determines to add a new comprehensive high school, the Committee supports and would advocate for an aquatics facility substantially equivalent to those offered at the three existing comprehensive high schools.

The Committee shared information on the Long Bridge Park development, but does not have any significant additional insight to that already known by the Sports Commission.

The Committee discussed the parking challenges at the aquatics facilities, particularly during the mid-day open swim hours. The parking enforcement has been a mixed bag, particularly at Yorktown and Wakefield.

The aquatics facilities are in the process of updating certain systems such as air circulation and water quality systems, and the Aquatics Committee has done or will do in-person walk throughs of all the improvements.

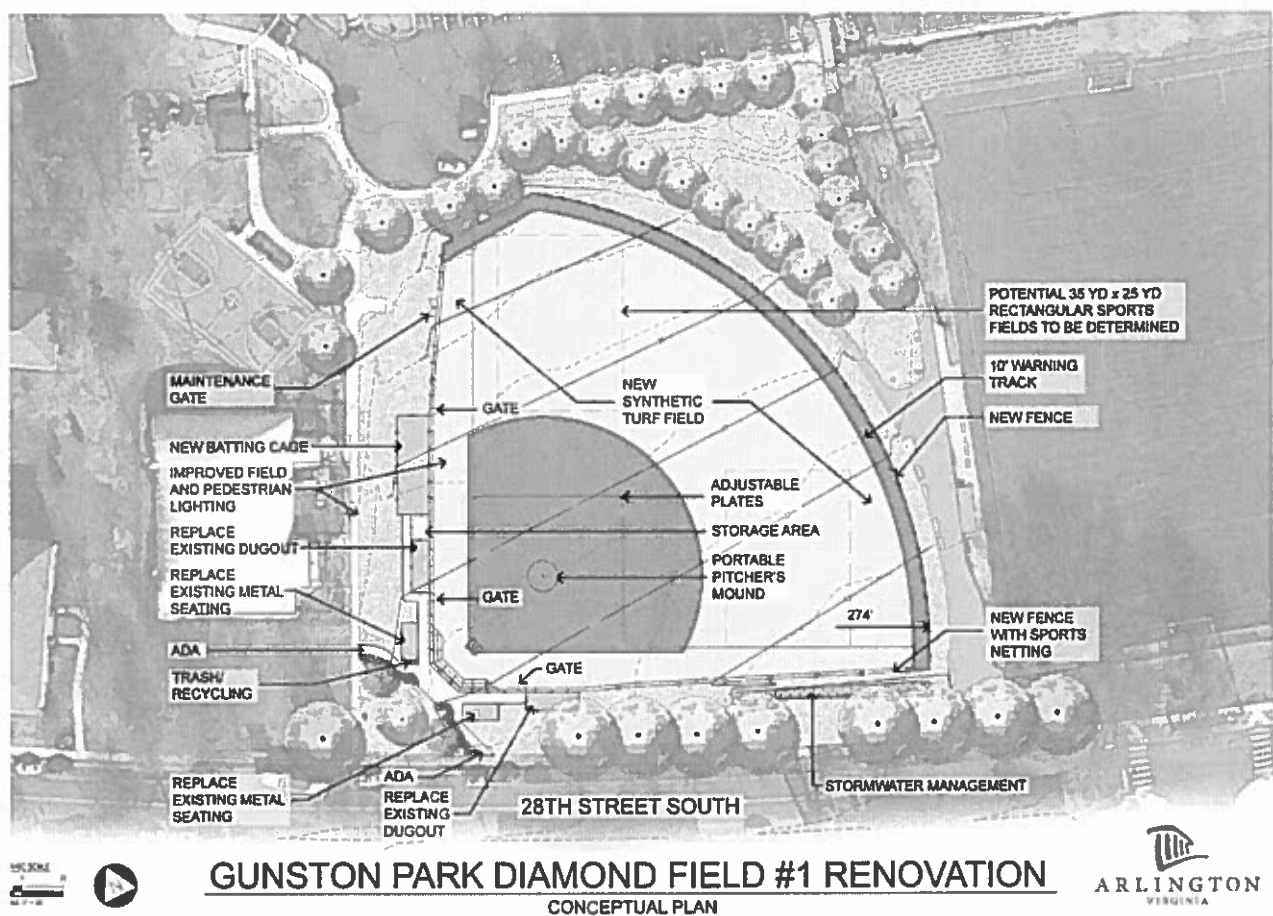
The Committee worked together on consolidating and updating the basic swimming pool rules that apply to each of the three County aquatics facilities.

The Committee discussed the potential to include data from private aquatics facilities for topics such as membership and fees, usage rates, programs and staff compensation within the various studies and analyses that are conducted for strategic decision making.

The Committee regularly discusses adequacy, availability and modifications to aquatics programs, including various types of lessons and classes for all participant groups.

Diamond Field Fund Committee- Steve Severn

Three projects were proposed by the Diamond Field Fund Committee (DFFC) for 2017. All three projects were approved by the Sports Commission to proceed toward Country Board approval.



1. Gunston Synthetic Turf-

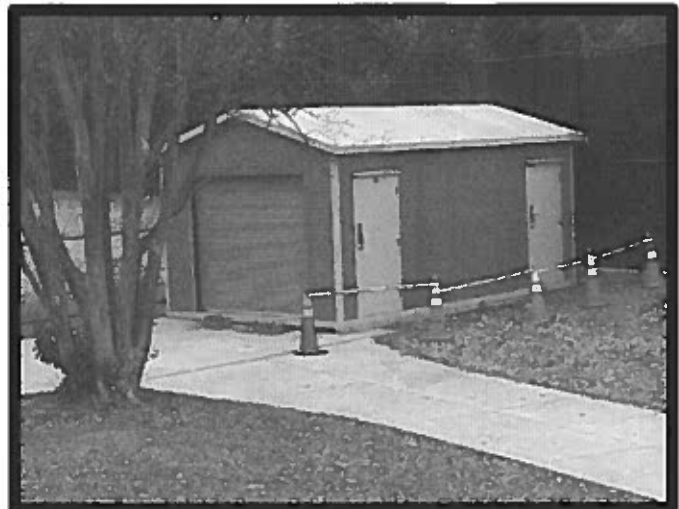
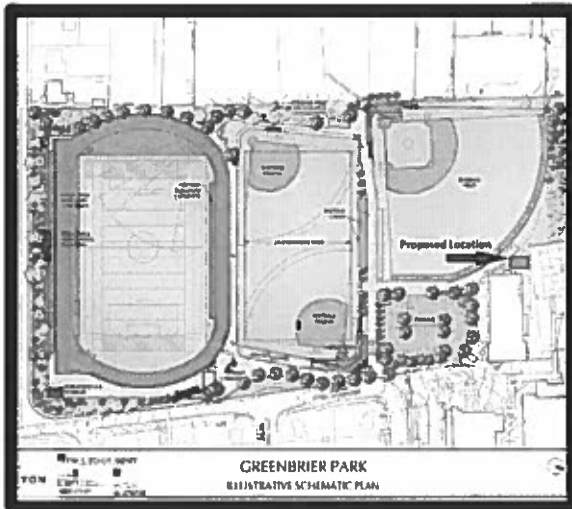
The Arlington Sports Foundation requested that \$190K from the Diamond Field Fund be allocated to supplement other monies being raised with the goal of reaching \$390K to install synthetic turf on the Gunston diamond field. Renovation of the Gunston diamond field is an approved project under the currently operating CIP. However, the budget could only support the installation of natural grass. The \$390K is the delta needed to install synthetic turf in lieu of the planned natural grass.

The \$390K goal was achieved and the project to install synthetic turf at Gunston was subsequently approved by the Department and Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the County Board in April of 2017. The Gunston Diamond Field Replacement project is proceeding now with an estimated completion in the 4th quarter of 2018.

[Projects and Planning Website](#)

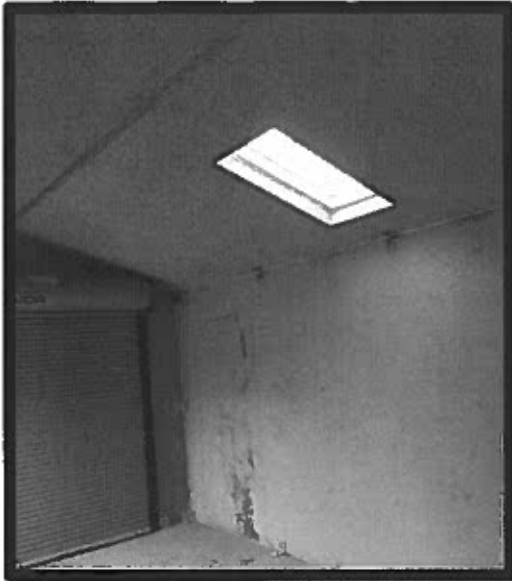
[Press release](#)

[Gunston map](#)



2. **Greenbrier Storage Building**

The DFFC recognized a dire need for indoor, dry, secure storage accessible to the Diamond youth sports organizations using Greenbrier Park. No such facility existed and subsequently, equipment was damaged, stolen or vandalized. Field maintenance supplies i.e. Turface and chalk had to be transported by individual coaches and were often lost due to weather exposure. These supplies are a major expense to the Diamond youth organizations and must be protected.



The proposed solution was a pre-fabricated, cast concrete building that would be purchased for \$30K and installed at Greenbrier Park in a location convenient to Diamond field users. The project was approved by the Sports Commission and Department of Parks and Recreation.

Greenbrier Storage Building (continued)

An RFP was released for bids in the spring of 2017. The contractor was then selected by DPR. The final design was approved by DPR in late summer and the building delivered on-site in late November of 2017.

On Dec. 3, 2017 an on-site meeting was held at Greenbrier Park with DFFC members (Steve Severn, Drew Murray, JP Cooney, and Adam Rasmussen) to inspect storage building and go over plans for bringing it on-line in the spring of 2018.

A final walk-through was conducted on Dec. 12 with Steve Severn and DPR staff when the building was released for use.



3. Concrete pad in Greenbrier Batting Cage

In line with initiatives engendered by the Youth Diamond Sport organizations to improve existing batting cage facilities and construct new batting cages where there are none, the DFFC proposed a project to greatly improve the existing batting cage at Greenbrier Field #2. The project was to install a concrete pad inside the existing gravel base cage. This would be the first step to eventually installing synthetic turf at a later date.

The project was estimated to cost ~\$10K. This project was approved by the SC and submitted to DPR for review. DPR solicited several area contractors for estimates and received at least two bids. For reasons cited by the contractor as "drainage concerns", the bids came in at 3 times the original estimate.(~\$30K).

It agreed by all parties (DPR, SC & DFFC) that this was not a viable project at this time for this amount of expenditure. The project was cancelled.

Potential Projects for 2018

After receiving input from the Diamond Youth Sports organizations, DFFC members came up with alternate proposals for continuing to improve batting cage facilities throughout the County. There was also feedback from the organizations that another option would be to hold off on any new projects for 2018 and allow the fund to build increase from the current \$75K level. The two potential projects on the table are:

1. Synthetic turf for batting cages at Greenbrier Park (up to 3 cages) \$15K max

This project, aside from greatly improving the existing facility, could have the side benefit of acting as a "pilot" program for evaluating several of the non-infill turf products on the market today.

2. Batting cage at Bluemont Park (~\$25K)

This is a significant project involving fencing where there is none and that could bring a significant reaction from the Bluemont community. The DFFC will need to research this further before recommending to the SC for approval.

Madison Manor- Sherry Kohan

Meeting/Activities:

Leading up to the initial meeting there was an online process for the county to collect a list of likes and dislikes from park users. All of the sports related areas (basketball courts, tennis courts, field) received like comments. Included in those were comments about the field being open. There were several comments made asking to not turf the field..

The initial meeting to discuss plans for the area was held on September 27th. The overall plan for the park is to maintain all of the existing amenities while improving them and accommodating the need for the Resource Protection Area (RPA). The existing field will remain a key component of the park will be reoriented in the new design. There were no plans presented to turf or light the field. Residents in attendance did not advocate to remove the field but were opposed to the idea of turf and lights. The tennis courts that are currently at the park will remain and are not in scope for any improvements as part of this project.

During the meeting, all attendees were encourage to rate the design that were presented for field orientation and a design for the playground/basketball courts/open area. It was mentioned that this voting would not define the final design but would be used in determining the final design by the planners.

A playground working group was setup to specifically work on the redesign of the playground and their first meeting was held on October 21.

There have been no further meetings.

Identify any activity, key decisions, or opportunities for SC statements/letters that are coming up in the next 1-3 months or anything else the SC should be aware of.

The project timeline indicates that a Concept Design would be created in November/December. There has not been any indication that this project design is available for review. The final design is set for January/February timeframe.

Do you need any input from the SC at this time?

Provided that the combo softball/rectangular field remains in the design there is no need for anything from SC at this time.

Out of School Time- Tricia Trapanese

Please see below my member report for the OTC (Out of School Time Commission).

I attended the meeting on Nov. 16, 2017 and represented the Sports Commission. There was nothing covered that directly related to actions or letters we can write at this time. The group is looking forward to working with the SC in the future. This group meets quarterly.

Related to this, I am attaching Jennifer Endo's recommendations on how to make it easier for all youth to participate in sports. She asked me to forward this to the group. Please distribute among your organizations as well. Jennifer presented at the SC several months ago. She works at AHC. If you have any specific feedback on this document, please let me know, and I will pass this along to Jennifer.

Making It Easy for Youth to Participate in Sports Best Practices

Getting there—Close to home (or school) is best!

- Whenever possible, hold the practices and games at the school the children attend or at a park or open space near where they live.
- Ask parents with reliable transportation and ample time to give rides to children who seem to struggle to get to practices and/or games. Finding rides for children needing them could be one volunteer parent's job.
- Ask parents before choosing a time and location. Then accommodate as many families as possible.

Getting signed up—The key is flexibility!

- Share information about youth sports programs including how to get financial aid in as many of the languages spoken by the parents of the youth in your community. Using Google translate with a disclaimer is better than not trying at all!
- In general, use simple, straightforward language to explain what's required. Graphics with less text is helpful. A simple checklist of what they'll need to provide is also helpful.
- Include a phone number the families can call with questions if possible. It's ideal if someone can answer the phone, especially someone who speaks the language(s) of the parents are likely to speak.
- Make the process to determine financial aid as simple and straightforward as possible to avoid deterring families from participation unintentionally and unknowingly.
- Take steps to preserve each person's dignity throughout the process. Remember that it's not easy to ask for help.
- Ideally, families can submit the registration and financial aid request forms electronically rather than having to take the time to visit an office. Generally, email is easier than delivering in person and texting photos of documents is more widely used than email.
- If families need to drop off anything, have a drop-off box and/or have them drop off at a community center or another location that is open many hours of the day, including evening hours.
- Hold school-based registration events when possible.
- Make sure your methods of advertising are not all electronic. Variety is a good way to reach all families including community centers, libraries, grocery stores and more.

Equipment—Be resourceful!

- If anyone needs help buying a uniform or purchasing any other required equipment (e.g. shin guards, baseball mitt, etc.), ask all the parents if anyone is willing to help without sharing the name of who needs help. Often parents are very happy to help in this way they know makes a difference for a child and the team.
- There are often local nonprofits who focus on getting lightly used sports equipment to children who need it. Check the Internet and ask around to find out if your area has this type of service.
- If you don't have such a service, organize a used equipment drive and then distribute as you become aware of specific needs.

- Collect uniforms and other equipment no longer needed to distribute to future players who may be unable to purchase a new uniform.
- Establish a financial aid program for equipment as these costs can also be a barrier to for some youth wanting to participate.

JFAC Buck Property Sub-Committee- Jessica Paska

2. Identify any meetings or activity since your last update

The County completed the acquisition of the Buck Property on November 20, 2017. The next step in the process is initiating Phase 3 of the Use Determination Process, which will analyze the use considerations for the Buck Property, developed by the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission (JFAC). The study is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2018 and is estimated to take 9-12 months to complete.

3. Identify any activity, key decisions, or opportunities for SC statements/letters that are coming up in the next 1-3 months or anything else the SC should be aware of.

There is nothing pressing in the next 1-3 months. The current Phase 3 analysis is including but not limited to the following:

- Transportation analysis (traffic impact analysis, pedestrian circulation, access to public transportation options, ingress and egress, parking, etc.)
- Environmental and historic/cultural analysis (natural resources, historic or cultural resources, noise, light, sustainability elements, etc.)
- Infrastructure review of capacities and access (water/sewer, storm sewer, electricity, telecommunications, gas, etc.)
- Cost analysis (site preparation, facility (new, addition or rehab), operating and maintenance costs, existing tenancies, etc.)

In phase 2 they mentioned they wanted to study/analyze decking over 66. There were also mentions of concerns about meeting APS needs (including schools/fields). The idea of including sports fields seems to have been dropped.

4. Do you need any input from the SC at this time?

No, unless we want to draft a letter expressing our support for including fields.

POPS- Justin Wilt

Meetings or activity since your last update -- 3 public meetings for POPS fans in December!

Dec 1 was a POPS meeting focused on land acquisition. I was unable to go; did anyone else go? If so, please enlighten us!

Dec 6 was the "big" meeting re: levels of service & turf conversions and lighting fields. Big showing from the anti-lights (Williamsburg, et al) group and some others who are newer on the scene but seem anti-fields/lights. Overall group mirrored the profile of the POPS respondents, in that there were very few people there under 40. Good showing from diamond sports groups (thanks!), not a good showing from rectangular field sports groups (despite many previous pleas for participation...). It is clear that there are strongly polarized opinions / positions around the county. It is also clear that the "anti-fields" forces, such as they are, are working together and coordinating their approaches and messaging. **My takeaway: The SC and sports groups should continue to communicate to the County Board about the need for added sports field capacity, and outline how turf conversions and field lighting can help add significant, cost-effective capacity.** The SC can help by developing some key talking points and sharing those with sports groups, as well as by meeting with County Board members to discuss these points.

Dec 14 was also well attended; the focus was natural resources + open space. Think "trees" and "open spaces other than playing fields." Good sports group representation at this one, which was helpful because, again, the "anti-fields" folks were out in numbers. As I wrote earlier, many view sports facilities as an obstacle to developing & enjoying casual use spaces, whereas my view is that this is not an "either/or" situation but rather an "and" situation, especially if sports fields are made available for other uses when not programmed for regular sports uses. Note that there is some real momentum towards this already (see "Virginia Highlands"....), and we need to be aware. As population pressures increase in Arlington, "multi-use" will be the watchword. That's fine as long as multi-use is done right and does not impact the quality / safety of facilities or restrict their hours of availability for sports uses. I suspect it would be helpful for us to be in this conversation, & not surprised by outcomes as happened recently. **My takeaway: The SC and sports groups should communicate to the County Board about the need for added recreational facility capacity, and we should develop outlines depicting successful multi-use scenarios for any facility possibly affected. What would successful multi-use outcomes look like? Of course, an underlying thread will continue to be how we need to add sports field / facility capacity as well, and thus repurposing existing fields completely for other casual uses does not work.** The SC can help by developing some key talking points and sharing those with sports groups, as well as by meeting with County Board members to discuss these points.

Next steps for POPS:

Early 2018 -- County Board Work Session (not sure if there's any SC role in this yet, will let folks know)

March/April -- Revised/final POPS draft posted online

April 2018 -- Final Public Outreach

April-June 2018 -- Commission Reviews (including a presentation to the SC)

Fall 2018 -- CB Review/Approval

Arlington Sports Commission

2018 Annual Plan

(A) Theme: Recreational Facilities, Facility Capacity and Related Issues

Fields and Field Issues

| Objective | Activity | Time Frame | Assigned to |
|---|---|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Continue to participate in the 4MRV project and advocate for increased sports & rec amenities in this area | a. Send joint letter with PRC to the working group asking for more analysis of the plan for an arts district and submission of an alternative for the two-block area that adheres to the group charge | Done | Shirley |
| | b. Meet with individual Board members to inform them about the direct the WG is taking, seek their support for adherence to the group charge | Jan-18 | Shirley |
| 2. Continue to participate in the JFAC process and monitor developments related to the Buck/Carlin Springs properties | a. Connect with JFAC leadership | | Jessica/Shirley |
| | b. Write letter to JFAC to advocate for including additional field siting options as part of their feasibility study | | Jessica |
| 3. Continue to participate in the POPS process and monitor key developments related to fields, field uses, field capacity, lighting of fields, etc. | Conduct outreach to the Board on the SC perspective about POPS | | Justin |
| | | | |
| 4. Continue to monitor other development projects where fields are affected/included/possible | a. Madison Manor | | Sherry |
| | b. Reed School - can work with the PRC to stay abreast of this project, but would be ideal to have someone attend the meetings | | |
| | c. Career Center/new high school -- committee was just formed; may still be time to get an SC rep added | | |

| Objective | Activity | Time Frame | Assigned to |
|--|---|------------|-----------------------------------|
| | <p>d. Work with DPR and/or PRC or others to determine when there are projects that the SC should be involved in (since we have been denied a permanent seat)</p> | | |
| <p>5. Take steps to help improve rectangular and diamond field condition and availability.</p> | <p>a. Continue to pursue the viability of putting synthetic turf on the futsal court at W-L</p> <p>b. Advocate for improvements at the Gunston community field</p> <p>c. Identify other fields in the county that could be either good for a Sports Foundation project (i.e., moderate improvements) or are just generally overlooked/forgotten</p> <p>d. Organize Sports Commission field trips to certain fields or parks to improve our collective understanding of field locations and conditions</p> <p>e. Seek info from DPR (maybe just as a reminder) of fields that are scheduled for upgrades over the next 5 years and how DPR goes about making these decisions</p> <p>f. Learn more about non-infill artificial turf options and encourage DPR to preview these product options.</p> <p>h. Seek feasibility study on the option of decking over 1-66 to yield increased space for rec facilities (and other benefits).</p> | | <p>Justin/David</p> <p>Justin</p> |
| <p>6. . Develop and/or research options for making diamond fields "multi-use" (i.e., capable of being fenced for the diamond sport user while also capable of being opened up off season to other users)</p> | <p>a. Conduct research on how other communities structure multi-use fields</p> <p>b. (Work with DPR to?) Develop a census of fields, varying hours and days, to provide a view of used and unused times per field. Addresses the "non-use during the weekday" complaint that is surfacing.</p> | | <p>Steve</p> |

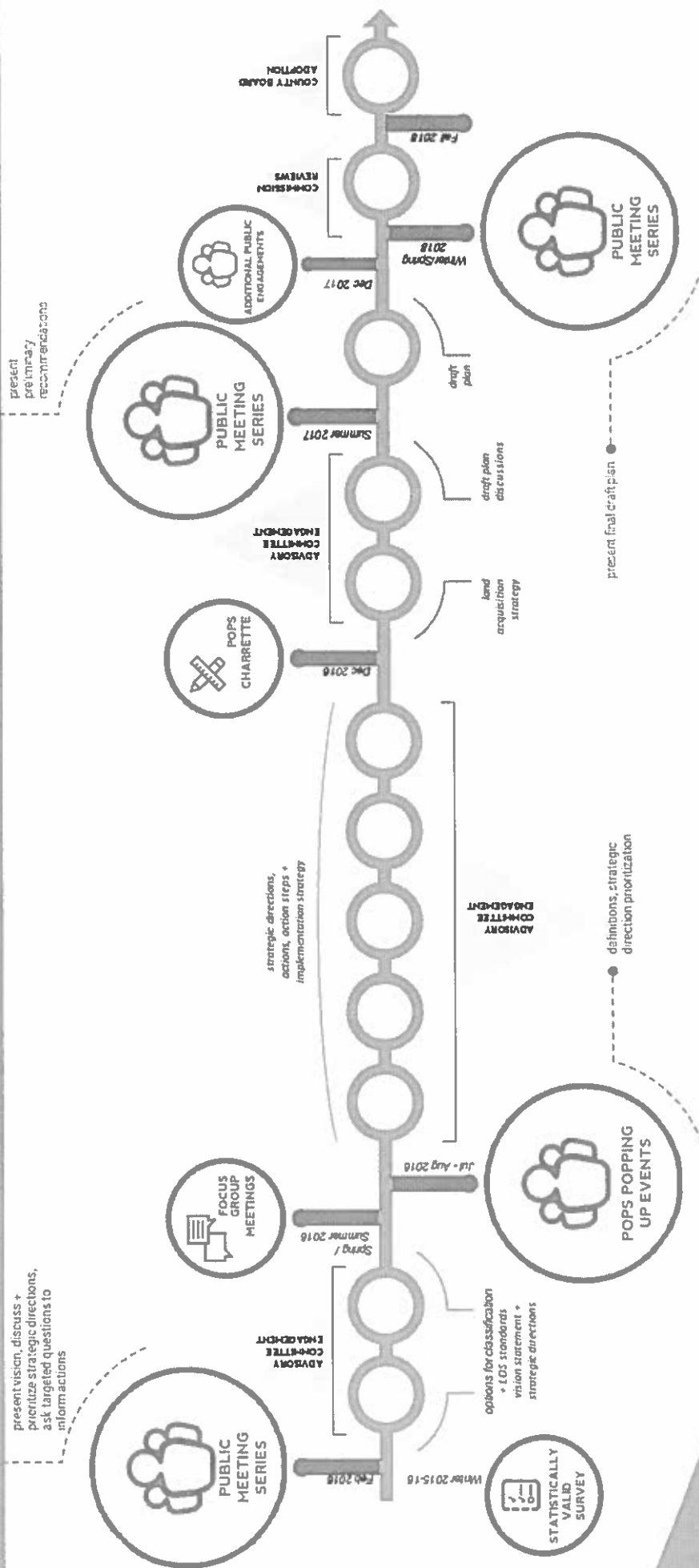
| Objective | Activity | Time Frame | Assigned to |
|---|--|------------|-------------|
| | <p>c. Reach out directly to the sources who are advocating to open or remove fencing and increase community use of outfields.</p> <p>d. Reach out to DPR to discuss their long-term strategy for protecting the fields if community use is expanded.</p> <p>e. Request meeting with ABYA to get them involved in protecting diamond fields.</p> <p>f. Consider issuing a white paper or fact sheet to summarize issues, pros, and cons of multi-use fields</p> | | |
| <p>7. Aid the creation and potential management of diamond and rectangular field advocacy groups. Identify issues that they c/should address.</p> | | | |
| <p>8. Leveraging the 2017 SC project looking at the efficiency of use of practice fields, work with DPR and sports groups to increase the efficiency of practice uses of existing ARL fields.</p> | | | |
| <p>9. Consider writing SC white paper on field issues that can help educate and advocate.</p> | | | |
| <p>B) Indoor Facilities and Related Issues</p> | | | |
| <p>1. Develop a better SC understanding/awareness of current and unmet demand for indoor facilities.</p> | <p>a. Request briefing from DPR on current use, number of facilities, amenities available at each, how facility is used now (by whom for what), nature of unmet demand, nature of any ongoing considerations to reallocate how facilities are currently used, any plans on the books for adding or expanding indoor capacity.</p> | | |

| Objective | Activity | Time Frame | Assigned to |
|--|--|------------|-------------|
| <p>2. Continue to advocate for the siting of a multi-use athletic center (MAC, fieldhouse)</p> | <p>a. Retrieve information and justification of the need for a MAC/fieldhouse in Arlington and how it was envisioned at Long Bridge Park; consider what amenities would be ideal in such a facility and whether there are any beneficial multi-use options (think of ways to gain supports, like combining with arts or community uses)</p> <p>b. Recover information on the decision made by the Long Bridge committee that such a facility would be better sited elsewhere in the county</p> <p>c. Conduct research on various such facilities around the country, including sizes and designs (are there various options, can we identify a smaller version that would be less intimidating for Arlington?)</p> <p>d. Arrange SC visits of such facilities in the immediate area</p> <p>e. Talk with developers/owners of such facilities to see what options might be for Arlington (business model, cost, footprint)</p> <p>f. Meet with DPR to see what their thoughts are about whether this is a viable option, where it might be located, what they think needs to be done to advocate for its creation</p> <p>g. Meet with DPR and perhaps AED about developing a facility within a new development project in Arlington</p> | | |
| <p>3. Request information about laws/regs/options for "co-location" of facilities – i.e. to understand when this might be feasible and be positioned to identify opportunities when they arise</p> | | | |

| Objective | Activity | Time Frame | Assigned to |
|--|--|------------|-------------|
| C) Non-DPR Facility Options and Opportunities | | | |
| 1. Research and gather info on non-County owned sports facilities like gyms and pools – to what extent do these supplement County resources? (i.e., does their existence mean that the county can focus on other areas?) | | | |
| (B) Theme: Underserved Communities | | | |
| 1. Take steps to develop a strategy for addressing the underserved youth population | a. Identify and collect information from coaches who have organized outreach programs to identify the challenges and options for best addressing/serving this population | | |
| | b. Identify other groups in town who might care about this issue and be willing to work on it | | |
| | c. Collect information from DPR and sports leagues to identify underserved schools | | |
| | d. Work with APS and other commissions to develop a possible approach or a pilot program for sustainable outreach | | |
| | e. Prepare a report, make recommendations to the county for steps they can take and steps others can take | | |
| (C) Building Our Network and Raising our Profile | | | |
| 1. Identify other Commissions and/or interest groups with whom the SC should build a relationship (expand our network, get our message out there) | a. Parks and Rec Commission | | |
| | b. Energy and Environment Conservation Commission | | |
| | c. Aquatics Commission | | |
| | d. Bicycle Advisory Committee | | |
| | f. Economic Development Committee | | |
| | g. Urban Forestry Commission | | |
| | h. Planning Commission | | |
| | i. Long Range Planning Commission | | |

| Objective | Activity | Time Frame | Assigned to |
|--|--|------------|----------------|
| 2. Expand Commission awareness of smaller sports and their needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Request information from DPR on what sports fall into this category; participation numbers and demographics data over the last 5 years; type of playing surface used; locations in Arlington where the sport is or can be played; are current playing locations in the right areas to serve participants? b. Identify residents who participate in these sports; invite them to a Commission meeting | | |
| 3. Continue to pursue opportunities to put the SC in front of the Board, individual Board members, County officials, other Commission chairs, civic associations, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase outreach to individual Board members b. Increase frequency of SC written statements (letters and position statements) on any issue that relates to sports or our objectives c. Ensure that the SC makes oral statements to the Board on issues that relate to sports or our objectives d. Meet at least 1-2 times per year with DPR senior leaders e. Seek meetings with other County officials that could be relevant to our agenda f. Consider ways to outreach to civic associations, promote our Commission, invite their input, seek new members | | Shirley/Justin |

TIMELINE





DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

ATHLETIC AND FACILITY SERVICES DIVISION
3700 South Four Mile Run Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22206
TEL 703-228-4747 TTY 711 parks.arlingtonva.us

Mr. Justin Wilt
Vice Chair
Arlington Sports Commission

Mr. Wilt,

Thank you for sharing Sports Commission questions and concerns surrounding Gunston Field #3, please see the Department of Parks and Recreation responses below. Feel free to follow up with any further questions.

1. What plans, if any, exist for improving the Gunston community field and making it playable again?

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is planning to include maintenance capital updates to Gunston Field #3 in the FY '19 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). If this work is added to the CIP, funds would become available July 1, 2018. If approved, these updates will include imported topsoil, and field fine grading of the site to avoiding pooling of water in different areas of the field. The irrigation necessary to maintain new Bermuda grass already exists on the site. The Parks and Natural Resources Division: Athletic Field Maintenance team will not invest operational funds in to Gunston Field #3 until the replacement has been completed.

2. What different options have been considered for making improvements to this field, and what are the pros and cons (including cost, sustainability, and installation timeframes) of each approach?

If synthetic turf were to be considered for Gunston Field #3, total investments could range between \$2-\$3 million. Since the site has never had synthetic turf, initial site work would include drainage and grading necessary for synthetic installation, which would be a cost driver. Installation of additional amenities that have become standard at our other turf field locations would also add to the initial investment, up to and included ADA remediation. This work could not be completed in the same timeframe as the Bermuda grass installation. DPR's position is that synthetic turf is the best long-term solution for Gunston Field #3, but would need APS approval as the site has been identified as a potential site for a new school.

Bermuda grass replacement is estimated between \$100-\$150k. While Bermuda grass is subject to seasonal closures and inclement weather closures that synthetic turf is not subject to, we believe that with the proper installation, and investment in maintenance, Gunston Field #3 can be utilized and maintained at a level that is beneficial to the community.

3. What improvement options offer the best return-on-investment from a sustainability perspective? For example, if the grass is replaced, what can be done to ensure that it lasts more than a season?

If funding becomes available for the installation of Bermuda Grass, there are multiple strategies that can be implemented to ensure that the condition of the field remains playable. For example, in keeping with practices already in place at other natural turf field sites, resting of the field between the spring and fall seasons, and closing the field during inclement weather have proven successful in keeping natural turf fields playable. While this is not current practice on Community-Use fields like Gunston #3, Westover, and Virginia Highlands #2, implementing these practices will be beneficial in helping to keep the field in playable condition.

4. Given the increased number of options on the market, is synthetic turf a possible option?

As stated previously, DPR's position is that synthetic turf is the preferred option of the department. While we are cognizant of all options that are available on the market, including non-infill applications, the fact remains that any investment in synthetic turf would have significantly more financial implications than the replacement of the natural grass.

5. Are there any forms of community involvement that could facilitate making improvements to this field?

If the natural grass field replacement takes place in 2018, DPR will look to the community to assist in helping rest the field when natural grass fields are closed. This is typically done between the spring and fall seasons, in the winter, and during inclement weather. DPR has a proven record of being able to maintain natural grass fields when they are given the proper rest. The Athletic and Facilities Services Division of DPR can add members of the community to the rainedout.com listserv, and can commit to more personal communications to the community when fields are closed. If the community can assist in helping spread the word and enforce these policies, it will go a long way in helping to maintain the integrity of the field.

Once the new Bermuda grass field is installed, we encourage the Sports Commission to continue to track the CIP, and request updates to the Commission or Commission leadership periodically to stay informed and provide input on field investments. Please feel free to make such requests through your Commission liaison Josh Colman, or the Athletic and Facility Services Division Chief, Peter Lusk. Thank you again for your inquiries.

Sincerely,

Peter Lusk
Division Chief
Athletic and Facility Services Division

Joshua Colman

From: Shirley Brothwell <sab1563@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 19, 2017 8:29 PM
To: David Tornquist; deborah.defranco@apsva.us; Drew Murray; Janet Eichers; Jessica Deegan Paska; John Bacon; Joshua Colman; Justin.wilt@gmail.com; Patricia Trapanese; Sherry Kohan; Steve Severn
Subject: Fwd: Virginia Highlands Diamond Fields Fencing (Intranet Quorum IMA00379383)
Attachments: IQFormatFile.txt
Categories: Sports Commission

Hi everyone,

I didn't actually write to the Board about this issue, but I thought I would share this email from Jay with you anyway.

Shirley

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Arlington County Board (imailagent) <CountyBoard@arlingtonva.us>
Date: Tue, Dec 19, 2017 at 12:46 PM
Subject: Virginia Highlands Diamond Fields Fencing (Intranet Quorum IMA00379383)
To: sab1563@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Brothwell,

On behalf of the County Board, I want to thank you for your message regarding the fencing around the two softball diamonds at Virginia Highlands Park. As you may know, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will be removing areas of fencing on the two diamond fields to allow for greater community access to the fields when they aren't scheduled for use.

I want you to know that we have heard and understand the concerns from the both softball community regarding removing the fencing, and how that may impact field condition, playability and safety, and Arlingtonians who desire more ready-access to parkland. Fenced fields create barriers to opportunities for unscheduled play.

With land scarce in Arlington, DPR is looking for creative means to increase access to parkland when it's not scheduled for use. Our goals in removing this fencing are to enable easy access to the fields when not scheduled, to enable safe play when fields are scheduled and to enable staff to monitor the use and field conditions to inform future planning work.

DPR understands the importance of protecting the integrity of the game of softball and they are confident that keeping the outfield fenced will support this goal, allowing for homeruns and balls to be hit into the gaps of the outfield. This change will allow for active and passive enthusiasts to enjoy the park.

We anticipate that we will complete the removal of fencing from the first and third base side of each field by the end of this year. Fencing will remain in place approximately 30' beyond the first and third base bags, as will 20' of fencing from the outfield field fence down each base line. Outfield fencing will remain in place.

It is important to note that the removal of the 1st and 3rd baseline fences on both fields is a short-term solution. In the long term, DPR plans to work with the community to develop a Master Plan for Virginia Highlands Park, after the Board adopts the Public Spaces Master Plan, and the County implements its new civic engagement standards, so that we ensure that an appropriate process is developed. When the time comes, DPR will reach out the all stakeholders to develop the future for Virginia Highlands Park.

After the fencing is removed, staff will monitor the fields closely to determine how the reduced fencing impacts field conditions. Safety and maintenance issues, including any inappropriate park uses, should be brought to the attention of Park Maintenance at [703-228-6525](tel:703-228-6525). DPR staff have assured me that they are committed to enforcing rules that prohibit dogs on sports fields, even when they are on a leash.

Questions and feedback on public engagement should be directed to Irena Lazic at [703-228-3206](tel:703-228-3206). Ms. Lazic is heading up the POPS (Panning our Places and Spaces) process. You can find a [wealth of information](#) on that process on the County website, where you can also sign up to receive updates. You may also find it helpful to view the [November 28 presentation](#) that staff made to the County Board on the Virginia Highlands diamond field fencing decision.

Thank you again for your interest in Arlington parks.

Sincerely,

Jay Fisette
Chair, Arlington County Board



ARLINGTON COUNTY
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414
Arlington, Virginia 22201



December 20, 2017

Honorable Jay Fiset
Chairman, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Virginia Highlands Park and Public Engagement

Dear Chairman Fiset,

On November 21, 2017 the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) heard a presentation on the proposed Engage Arlington campaign from Bryna Helfer, Assistant County Manager and Director of Communications and Public Engagement. The Engage Arlington Campaign has great potential and we are encouraged by the county's commitment to implement a more diverse, inclusive, and dynamic public engagement for future projects in Arlington.

The presentation was followed by a conversation with representatives of the Aurora Highlands Civic Association. As noted in the November 28, 2017 email to the County Board, the August 22, 2017 PRC meeting was held at Virginia Highlands Park and we reviewed the various capital maintenance projects that have been completed there over the past several years. Community members also spoke at the October 24 and December 19, 2017 PRC meetings and we have had numerous email exchanges with residents.

The commission has heard a long and detailed series of examples regarding a lack of responsiveness to community concerns and a lack of adequate and effective public engagement regarding park and recreation planning for that area. Aurora Highlands and the surrounding neighborhoods have had and are currently undergoing, rapid residential growth, and have also been the recipients of intense, and sometimes unwanted, expansion of park and recreation facilities. Given county development priorities, this part of Arlington will continue to see large increases in population density and we anticipate further increase in the serious, current pressures on public space. A key concern is the configuration and expansion of park facilities, often at the cost of accessible casual-use open space.

The commission has discussed the history of the park, community needs, and county needs in the area. In particular, we believe that issues regarding inclusive community engagement, unmet park needs, and a lack of multi-purpose casual use and natural space are not only critical for the community, but are likely a harbinger of future problems elsewhere in the county. Mediations and solutions for this park may be informative and a useful precedent for similar cases.

The PRC makes the following comments and recommendations to address current concerns and avoid recurring difficulties in the community and elsewhere in the county:

1) Increased community access to diamond fields

The PRC supports the County Manager's recommendation (summarized at the November 28, 2017 County Board meeting) to provide more community access to the two diamond fields in Virginia Highlands Park, except when specifically programmed for use. We believe that this is an appropriate interim step to provide additional community access while a longer-term master planning process is explored. Indeed, as was noted at the December 19 PRC meeting, residents are already enjoying access to the space. However, we are concerned that the decision was again made without engaging in a public process with the community first.

Opening up the diamond fields will not change the use or programming of the fields, but will allow community access when the fields are not in use. The PRC notes the initial success of this action at Bluemont Park. The PRC urges that during this interim period, staff pay attention to maintenance and field condition issues that may arise and heed concerns raised by the softball community. As the interim period proceeds we also recommend that staff consider a county-wide review of accessibility policies at other locked "permit only" fields.

2) Investigate encroachment of adjacent property owner into Virginia Highlands Park

We urge that the county examine the location of a linear fence along the south side of the park. We understand that fence may be improperly located 10 to 12 feet inside the park property boundary. It impedes park access along a significant stretch of the park border. If this fence at this location was the result of a negotiation between the county and the owner, we would like to be apprised of the rationale. If it was not, and was illegally placed on public property, we believe the responsible party should be forced to remove it immediately and restore the location to its original state, at no cost to the county.

3) Identify a mediator to facilitate and manage communication between the county and the local community associations

Currently, and given the past history, civic association representatives feel obliged to communicate with the county through the County Manager's office. Designating a mediator would help to establish effective communications on park issues and to promote county and neighborhood understanding about current park problems and possibilities to resolve them. This role would include internal liaison work to determine the responsible offices and staff within the county government to answer questions and bring resolution. Improved communication, a comprehensive triage of pending issues, and a means to address those issues will, we believe, not only improve the current facilities and use of the park, but also pave the way for effective engagement and planning for that area in the future.

4) Identify scope and timeline for expanded master plan process

Much of the angst in this area stems from the lack of a master plan for Virginia Highlands Park and the adjacent areas. We propose that no permanent changes be made to the park and immediate surrounding areas until a complete assessment of the uses and the space dedicated to each use has been completed. We recommend an expanded scope

to include the fire station, Aurora Hills Library, Senior Center and Community Center, as well as Virginia Highlands Park--all of which are central to surrounding residents, involving three civic associations: Aurora Highlands, Arlington Ridge and Crystal City. The commission recommends developing a timeline for an expanded master plan process.

5) Piloting independent facilitators for the master plan process

We recommend that the county utilize independent facilitators to plan and manage community engagement in the master planning process for Virginia Highlands Park and surrounding areas. Independent facilitators can act as neutral discussion leaders and can be effective in both achieving a balanced and informative engagement process as well as in restoring community trust. Given the recent history of community engagement regarding this park, it is critical that a master plan process be conducted in a manner that allows full and open consideration of county and community interests, needs, and challenges. Independent plan facilitators will allow county staff to participate as resources about county priorities, regulations, processes and other relevant aspects of the county role, without also having to manage the process and events themselves. Piloting this master plan process with third-party facilitators is an opportunity to both break new ground in engagement with this community, but also to serve as an initial example of this method of engaging the public.

6) Review and reconsider roles and responsibilities of public-facing county offices

With increasing resident concerns about future development in the county, and increasingly complex planning challenges facing county officials, public interest and involvement continues to be a key opportunity and challenge. The proposed public engagement initiative appears to have good potential. However, we believe that the current dynamic of county-resident interaction calls into question the ability of county offices to respond effectively and without compromising their other duties. We suggest that the county review the current roles and responsibilities regarding contact with the public in relevant offices, and assess whether current practice reflects those defined functions. Depending on the findings of this review, the county may want to consider re-aligning functions and perhaps realigning or adding resources to optimize the core functions of operations, program and communications/engagement offices. In particular, we note that field operations staff may become engaged in issues not within their purview, and that the ombudsman function may be too narrowly defined.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on the potential for solutions at Virginia Highlands Park and adjacent areas and for future public engagement there and county wide.

Sincerely,



Caroline Haynes, Chair
Park and Recreation Commission

**cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Members, Planning Commission
Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Bryna Helfer, Assistant County Manager and Director of Communications and Public
Engagement
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
Members, Sports Commission
Aurora Highlands Civic Association
Arlington Ridge Civic Association
Crystal City Civic Association**