



**ARLINGTON COUNTY
SPORTS COMMISSION**
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 414
Arlington, Virginia 22201



November 3, 2016

The Honorable Libby Garvey
Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Bluemont Field #3

Dear Chair Garvey,

The Sports Commission would like to share its thoughts about the plans to renovate Bluemont Field #3 and improve storm water management at the Park. The strongly-held and sometimes opposing opinions about these plans among the various stakeholders represent, in many ways, a microcosm of the challenges facing our community. Demand for sports facilities in Arlington is high and growing, but efforts to improve or expand such facilities to meet demand often, unfortunately, encounter some form of neighborhood or community opposition.

The Sports Commission recently adopted a Position Statement which recognizes that any facility development or planning process requires input from a range of stakeholders and that, while the input of immediate neighbors must be seriously considered, the ultimate decision for how to use county-wide resources should reflect the needs and desires of the entire Arlington community.

With this in mind, the Commission would like to make the following points about the Bluemont plans:

1. Field #3 is an important facility that is heavily used by Arlington's youth baseball organizations. While we respect the need to preserve open spaces in Arlington, we believe that it is entirely appropriate to maintain this space as a diamond field and to proceed with renovations that will bring the field up to current play, safety, and accessibility standards.
2. Given the shortage of field space for all sports activities, the Commission supports making this field available to others when the field is not being used according to the Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) permit takes priority policy.
3. In the spirit of compromise, the Commission supports the County Manager's recommendation to open portions of the 1st and 3rd baseline fencing and reduce the height of the outfield fencing. However, we are concerned that granting open access will subject the field to additional wear and tear and negatively affect the field condition for permitted users.

Therefore, we are making three recommendations:

- a. DPR creates a specific schedule for rover monitoring or reviews of the field on a frequent basis to assess the usage impact to the quality of the baseball field, given the openness without sections of the fence. The result may be that more frequent maintenance during baseball season is needed.
- b. For a period of one year after project completion, DPR monitors the effect of open access on the field's condition. If DPR determines that open access is causing an unacceptable level of wear and tear on the field, it should develop a mitigation plan, such as adding roll-away gates or other alternative gate options, to add further protection for the field. If the wear and tear is extreme, we recommend that the maintenance budget for Bluemont Field #3 be increased.
- c. The Sports Commission hears repeatedly from users that DPR's resources for maintaining fields has been cut to unacceptable levels. In the wake of such cuts, a large portion of weekly maintenance for diamond fields has been carried out by parent volunteers. We are concerned that this approach will not be sustainable. Therefore, we ask that DPR work with the County Manager and the Board to ensure its field maintenance budget is sufficient to adequately care for the County's outdoor athletic fields.

Finally, the Sports Commission notes that challenges of the type encountered at Bluemont Park are likely to continue to manifest themselves as Arlington tries to meet the demands of our many citizens. Therefore, it is important that DPR keep our Commission, as well as affected users and neighbors, apprised of their maintenance and development plans.

Sincerely,

Heather Cocozza
Chair, Sports Commission

cc: Members, Arlington County Board
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation