



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

November 15, 2016

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Katjana Ballantyne	Chair	Present	
Robert J. McWatters	Vice Chair	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five Alderman	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six Alderman	Present	
Dennis M. Sullivan	Alderman At Large	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One Alderman	Present	
Maryann M. Heuston	Ward Two Alderman	Present	
Tony Lafuente	Ward Four Alderman	Present	
William A. White Jr.	Alderman At Large	Present	
John M. Connolly	Alderman At Large	Absent	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Alderman at Large	Present	

Others present: Luisa Oliveira - OSPCD, Michael Glavin - OSPCD, Jill Lathan - Recreation, Emily Monea - SomerStat, Representative Denise Provost, Tim Snyder - Mayor's Office, Charles Sillari - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 7:45 PM by Alderman Ballantyne and adjourned at 9:58 PM.

- 1. Presentation by the City's Administration relative to fields** Ms. Oliveira opened the meeting giving a recap of the fields planning process, explaining the characteristic of various size fields, noting that Dilboy is the only extra large field in the city. Diamond fields were mentioned, however, this presentation is only for rectangular fields. Field usage is high and the highest demand is for use during peak hours. The peak field usage demand is 910 hours. Natural grass field usage is projected at 500 hours and artificial turf is projected at 900 hours.

Candidates for the position Field Maintenance Operations Director job have backgrounds in turf management. A future maintenance plan, along with staff training, will be something the city hasn't had before. Player safety depends on the quality and condition of a field.

Other topics of discussion included the renovation of Lincoln Park, the Dilboy auxiliary field, environmental impacts, permeability, carbon, fuels, materials, a planned storm water

project at Nunziato Field (that will result in a high performance natural grass field), and an artificial turf field being put on the roof of a parking garage at the high school.

The proposed plan suggests 6 grass and 6 artificial turf fields with Conway Park's field being the only one converted to artificial turf. Winter Hill is going to bid and conversations continue with DCR about improving the quality of fields.

Chairman Ballantyne stressed the importance of this subject and invited people to contribute information to the Board of Aldermen to ensure that their voices are heard.

PUBLIC HEARING: related to the city's athletic fields master plan/usage plan and other field-related matters.

COMMENTS - Current Meeting:

Representative Provost spoke about general sustainability considerations, such as re-leveling and replacement of membranes, at a cost of \$500,000, which she said DCR will expect the city to pay. Representative Provost reported that Daly Field at Simmons College had a price tag of \$7.7 million dollars, noting that financial sustainability is also a consideration. DCR owned fields are required to be available to anyone in the commonwealth 50% of the time and also have to be fenced in. With Somerville being the largest polluter of the Mystic River, runoff from artificial turf is a large concern. At the conclusion of her remarks, Representative Provost placed a pound of grass seed on the podium, pointing out that it grows well in sand, clay, is drought tolerant and is her recommendation to the city.

Various speakers presented their comments and a summary of their concerns follows:

- the lack of field space, especially full sized fields, making it difficult to expand athletic programs
- unsafe field conditions and the current sub-par condition of the city's grass fields,
- carbon footprint and offset,
- providing access to safe and available spaces for children to play,
- social justice issues and physical barriers,
- creating safer space and a path to the river,
- maximize field usage time,
- counter productivity of fencing around fields,
- Nunziato field being off-line for 2 years,
- preference for using organic grass,
- detriments of artificial turf, e.g., the carcinogens used in making the artificial surface field becoming aerosolizes when they become too hot,
- detriments of playing on compacted earth,
- making the city as green as possible since fields are used for more than sports,
- the city is only focusing on sports - the fields belong to everyone,
- although it may be easier to coach soccer on turf, grass is a better experience for the players,

- stop field use after 8:00 PM due to light pollution,
- turf allows kids to be faster and more competitive,
- the plan is fiscally irresponsible and has missed opportunities for outdoor space,
- interest in adult sports,
- accelerate the plan,
- alternative in-fills for turn fields,
- refusal of some cities/towns to play Somerville's fields,
- the issue should not be about the ability of kids to play vs. the environment, rather, more fields should be the goal.

Claudia Morrow spoke about the money the city is spending and said that the BOA sounds like they don't know what is going on. She feels the city's grass fields should be fixed now and asked why the city is worried about Chicago developers. She abuts Conway Park and stated that people around Conway Park haven't been notified about what is going on. She is against artificial turf and said that there's a bigger picture, i.e., it's not about turf vs. grass. People are made to think it's turf or nothing.

Wig Zamore commended the city's planning staff, although there is "no" progress on the comprehensive plan to create 125 acres of open space. Access to green space is important and there must be a plan for everyone in the city. He suggested moving ahead with the open space plan in the comprehensive plan.

Bill Shelton spoke about the tragic lack of open and green space. He understands the needs for children's sports and said that there is also the need for a healthy planet. He wants to make sure new development includes open and green space.

Chairman Ballantyne will keep the record open until the close of business on November 29, 2016 to accept additional written public comment.

Handouts and Public Comments received:

- Miscellaneous related information
- Public Comments - Combined
- Public Comments - Combined2