



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods, and diverse communities of Fairfax County

FAIRFAX COUNTY ATHLETIC COUNCIL MINUTES

February 17, 2016

2016 Council Members

Magisterial Representatives:

Marcia M. Pape Daniels
Secretary
Braddock District

Gregory Beckwith
Dranesville District

Harold Leff,
Vice Chairman
Hunter Mill District

Lisa Mickey
Lee District

Barbara R. Lowrey
Mason District

Jonathan Willmott
Mount Vernon District

Stephen McLaughlin,
Chairman
Providence District

Michael Thompson, Jr.
Springfield District

Vacant
Sully District

Elmer Arias
Member-At-Large

Clement Chan
Diversity-At-Large

Town Representatives:

Jeffrey E. Stein
Town of Clifton

Vacant
Town of Herndon

Sam Althoff
Town of Vienna

Sports-Specific Representatives:

Jerry Klemm
Baseball Council

Suzy Willemsen
Fast Pitch Softball Council

Carl A. S. Coan, III
Adult Softball Council

Gordon Austin
Basketball Council

Mark Meana,
Football Council

Mary Ann Wagner
Lacrosse Council

Lula Bauer
Soccer Council

Chuck Pruitt
Volleyball Council

Jenni Cantwell
Women's Sports

Non-Voting Members:

Michael Thompson
Park Authority

Todd Johnson
Park Authority

Megan McLaughlin
School Board

William Curran
Fairfax County Public Schools

Executive Agency:

Christopher A. Leonard
Director
Neighborhood and Community
Services

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Marcia Pape Daniels, Braddock District
Gregory Beckwith, Dranesville District
Harold Leff, Hunter Mill District
James Elder, Hunter Mill District Alternate
Lisa Mickey, Lee District
Barbara Lowrey, Mason District
Jonathan Willmott, Mount Vernon District
Stephen McLaughlin, Providence District
Clarke Gray, Providence District Alternate
Michael Thompson Jr., Springfield District
Ralph Wills, Sully District Alternate
Eric Sohn, Diversity-At-Large Alternate
Jeffrey E. Stein, Town of Clifton
Sam Althoff, Town of Vienna
Mark Meana, Football Council
Rebecca Frece, Slow Pitch Softball Council Alternate
Trish Moxie, Soccer Council Alternate
Chuck Pruitt, Volleyball Council
Jenni Cantwell, Women's Sports Programs

COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Michael Thompson Jr., Fairfax County Park Authority
Todd Johnson, Fairfax County Park Authority
Bill Curran, Fairfax County Public Schools
Sarah Allen, Neighborhood and Community Services
Karen Avvisato, Neighborhood and Community Services
Mark Martino, Neighborhood and Community Services

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Vacant, Sully District
Clement Chan, Diversity-At-Large
Elmer Arias, Member-At-Large
Vacant, Town of Herndon
Rob Hahne, Baseball Council
Dillon Lee, Basketball Council
Suzy Willemsen, Fast Pitch Softball Council
Mary Ann Wagner, Lacrosse Council
Carl Coan, Slow Pitch Softball Council
Lula Bauer, Soccer Council

GUESTS:

Eric Kulczycky, Visit Fairfax

Fairfax County Athletic Council
12011 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
703 324-5501



MEETING OPENING

Mr. McLaughlin called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Roll was called and a quorum was present.

PRESENTATIONS TO COUNCIL

Noise Ordinance

Mr. Meana discussed the noise ordinance, which went into effect today. He stated that it really does not affect sports with the possible exception of adult field use after 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday. He has been assured that any issues will be written up, discussed, and examined on a case-by-case basis, and if it is sports-related, NCS will be consulted to evaluate whether the concern was an exception or the norm. Mr. Thompson added that an exception has been created for sports activities on open spaces or fields. Although the blowing of a whistle does exceed the prescribed decibel level, they will not be trying to enforce this.

Mr. Curran stated that FCPS had input on the ordinance. Out of 25 high schools, two present the biggest challenges. McLean High School poses the most significant issues due to its location, but they brought in an audio technician, will redo the sound system, upgrade speakers, and put a regulator on their amplifier to ensure it cannot exceed the prescribed decibel level. Hayfield High School will be addressed next. Mr. Johnson added that amplified sound is not allowed at Park Authority facilities without express written permission. The biggest areas of community concern were high school stadiums, golf courses, and dog parks, not community use of athletic fields.

CITIZENS TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

N/A

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

The December 16, 2015 minutes were approved.

The Council held a meeting on January 20, 2016, but a quorum was not present. Ms. Stallman and Ms. Bentley gave a presentation on the Park Authority Needs Assessment, after which there was vigorous discussion.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. McLaughlin informed the Council that he and Mr. Hahne met with representatives from the Park Authority and NCS on the Needs Assessment. Ms. Avvisato added that the Park Authority heard the Council's input, as evidenced by the changes made prior to presentation to the Park Board.

An e-mail was sent to Mr. McLaughlin regarding zoning restrictions prohibiting community use of parochial school gyms. These restrictions are generally at the site plan level and are a result of neighborhood concerns about parking, noise, etc. While making use of potentially unused gym space is a desirable goal, the question is whether the Council wants to get involved in a zoning issue. Mr. McLaughlin will circulate the e-mail to the Council.

Mr. McLaughlin thanked the Council for the quick response on a draft letter opposing Virginia Delegate Marcus Simon's bill to place a three-year moratorium on installation of synthetic turf that contains crumb rubber. After the letter was sent, the bill was killed in committee. Mr. Thompson suggested it would be appropriate to formally reflect the Council's position in the minutes and made a motion to ratify the letter that was sent. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Ms. Pape informed the Council that the EPA, CDC, and Consumer Product Safety Commission have embarked on a wide-ranging research effort to study the safety of crumb rubber with the ambitious goal of releasing a draft report by the end of the year. Mr. Meana added that a Congressional hearing on the safety of crumb rubber scheduled for January was postponed due to the snow and has not yet been rescheduled.

Mr. McLaughlin previously distributed a draft letter from the Council to the School Board thanking them for not cutting athletics in their proposed budget and urging them to continue that position. A motion was made by Mr. Thompson, seconded, and unanimously approved for Mr. McLaughlin to finalize and send the letter.

Mr. McLaughlin will reserve a spot to testify on behalf of the Athletic Council at the county budget hearings in April.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Gym Allocation Policy Committee

Ms. Avvisato told the Council that Mr. Leonard has approved the Gym Allocation Policy Committee's recommendation without any changes. The policy is being sent to the County Attorney's Office. Although the gym custodial subsidy was discussed, Mr. Leonard is not ready to make a change at this time. It is hoped that the County Attorney will approve the policy in March so the Council can review it and then vote in April. It will then go to the Board of Supervisors for approval, hopefully in June, so that it can be implemented next winter.

Needs Assessment Committee

Mr. Thompson will discuss during the Park Authority report.

SPORT SPECIFIC UPDATES

Football

Mr. Meana said the high school and youth football leagues are collaborating for a mega-clinic on March 19. Over 200 people have already registered. They are trying to narrow the gap between the scholastic and youth communities in the interest of safety and better training. Mr. Curran added that the high schools have been working with football for a couple of years, moved on to lacrosse, cheerleading, and now wrestling, will work with track in the spring. The goal is to have linkage between the schools and community in all sports.

Soccer

Ms. Moxie reported that soccer is gearing up for the spring season. The biggest impact will be the later high school start times and the cascading effect for community use and adult sports.

MATTERS OF INTEREST FROM GOVERNING BODIES

Fairfax County Public Schools

Mr. Curran stated that it is state tournament week. Swim and dive is being hosted here, using George Mason facilities for swim lanes and Oak Marr and Audrey Moore for dive. Hosting saves significant travel and hotel costs. Wrestling is also this weekend, followed by basketball next week.

The budget continues to be a major issue. Mr. Curran said he appreciated the support from the Council to preserve athletics. As previously noted, 0.8% of the school budget, or \$21 million, is devoted to activities and athletics. Mr. Thompson noted that Mr. Curran's office took a 10% cut in each of three years before Dr. Garza arrived, which was never restored. Mr. Curran added that back in 1992-93, to cut costs, the number of games played was reduced for all sports except football (which has so few games) and Fairfax County athletes continue to play fewer games than those in the rest of Virginia.

The Virginia High School League will again realign for the 2017-18 season. They will continue with six classifications, but return to the four-region model. Although not yet adopted, plans are on the VHSL website.

Fairfax County Park Authority

Mr. Johnson stated that the McNaughton diamond field complex will be renovated, a second synthetic turf field will be added at Pine Ridge Park, and the synthetic turf will be replaced at Mason District Park. The Park Authority will be meeting with the baseball and softball community to discuss how maintenance is being done and look at the services currently being provided for diamond fields.

Mr. Thompson said that the Park Authority staff reworked its presentation on the Needs Assessment before presenting to the Park Board. The data show that 67 additional rectangular fields and five small diamonds will be needed by 2025 to meet the community's needs. These numbers were reached by projecting 8% population growth and that the standard level of service will remain the same. There is a need to improve existing fields, plus space for new fields in various master plans. While they concluded there is not a deficit of 90' diamond fields, there is need for a tournament complex. The Park Authority cannot provide all the needed fields, and the high schools are pretty well built out. A long-term discussion with the Board of Supervisors about how to meet the need must take place. Athletics are responsible for multiple millions of visits to parks each year--perhaps as much as half--but athletic fields make up only 2% of park land.

Mr. Thompson informed the Council that the Park Board has been refining the list of projects for inclusion in the 2016 bond and is down to approximately \$87 million. Projects included in the plan are \$10 million to develop a baseball complex at Patriot North off Braddock Road, development of a field at Audubon Estates off Route 1 (an area of high need), conversion of Nottoway Field 4 to synthetic turf, and numerous other renovations. Twenty million is included for renovation of the Mount Vernon Rec Center and \$2 million for planning for the renovation of Audrey Moore Rec Center. In the current draft, 24% of the bond funds focus on athletic facilities.

Mr. Thompson explained that the Patriot North complex would include four 90' diamonds and two 60' diamonds, although the master plan still needs to be developed. Mr. Hahne and the Baseball Council believe that more diamond fields are needed despite the Needs Assessment conclusion that there is no deficit of diamonds.

Mr. Gray voiced agreement with the need for more diamonds and expressed concern over the recommendation to build more rectangular fields. Mr. Thompson explained that since the last Needs Assessment ten years ago, on a percentage basis, more of the diamond field need was met than rectangular field need. On a use basis, rectangular fields are used by a wider variety of sports and, therefore, there is a greater demand. The changing demographics also show a growing need on the adult side, which primarily uses rectangular fields. So, while the number of dollars invested in rectangular fields exceeds that invested in diamonds, we have fallen shorter on rectangular field needs than on diamond field needs.

Mr. Elder inquired whether there has been any recent discussion about building a rec center in the Hunter Mills district, the only district without one. Mr. Thompson responded that there is always discussion about building more facilities, but it is not going to be a top priority given other needs.

Neighborhood and Community Services

Mr. McLaughlin started the report by referencing Mr. Leonard's e-mail regarding the budget. Mr. McLaughlin referred the proposed increase in rectangular field user fees to \$9.50/player and \$25/tournament team to the Turf Field Committee for them to consider, develop a proposal, and return it to the Council for a vote at the March meeting.

Ms. Avvisato reviewed the background. There is a \$1 million/year deficit for artificial turf field replacement with 17 fields to replace in the next three years. She said Mr. Leonard views the proposal to split the yearly deficit with \$500,000 from the county and \$500,000 from fee increases as a victory in this hard time, with schools not getting the funding they want and a four cent property tax increase. NCS has examined fees in surrounding jurisdictions and found Fairfax County fees the lowest, with the next lowest jurisdiction charging \$12. This proposal does not affect diamond or gym users. There is a turf field development fund, and the Council needs to weigh whether to use that money to build more fields or to partially offset the fee. Council members are urged to reach out to their constituent groups and get feedback, then e-mail their thoughts to either members of the Turf Committee or to Ms. Avvisato. If we oppose the fee increase, we need to come up with another option to raise the \$500,000 needed.

Mr. Meana reminded Council members that a \$2.50/player increase to go toward replacement was proposed last year as part of the Synthetic Turf Task Force Report and the Board of Supervisors turned it down. The \$5.50 fee has now been in place for 12 years, and we have 79 artificial turf rectangular fields in the county. He stated that we have been very fortunate that the County Executive has put millions of dollars toward turf fields.

Ms. Avvisato was asked whether there would be a fee increase for out-of-county residents; she replied that there would not be under the proposal from the County Executive.

Mr. Stein asked if there could be some type of waiver or reduced fee for the 6-week summer session. He said it primarily affects costs for adults. Ms. Avvisato responded that if an adult league goes a week or two into the summer session, for those overruns, NCS tries not to double-charge. Mr. Martino added that if your league starts later and overlaps with the summer season, but still runs only a 16-week season, there will not be an additional charge. However, if your soccer league ends June 15 and your travel teams want to practice all summer, there will be an additional charge for summer field use.

Mr. Thompson noted that we are building more and more turf fields, including baseball fields, but the way this fee is structured, the rectangular field community is being asked to fund the renovation of all turf fields. He said it is important to recognize that, long-term, if we build more turf diamonds, the diamond community must contribute.

Ms. Avvisato informed the Council that the AFAR online application system has been approved to be upgraded and will be online in 6 months.

The mandatory spring field users meeting is February 23, 7 p.m. at Luther Jackson Middle School, which would be a good time for Council members to connect with groups they represent. All are encouraged to attend.

NEW BUSINESS

N/A

OLD BUSINESS

N/A

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marcia M. Pape Daniels', written in a cursive style.

Marcia M. Pape Daniels
Secretary