

CRICKET

Are there any steps to lay turf pitches for cricket usage? I am sure there will be lot of teams willing to spend money on making turf pitches like the one in Lake Fairfax. There are plenty of teams in the area not getting enough support when it comes to usage of field in cricket. Right now these teams are either fighting for permits at lake Fairfax or other Soccer Fields. When we use the soccer fields, obviously we get complaints from the soccer teams. Allocation of baseball fields for cricket usage is not appropriate as it doesn't have the right dimensions. I personally have been knocking the door to lay a turf pitch at Centreville elementary and have initiated talks with county last yr which hasn't been fruitful yet. I am using this medium to show our concern and take into account the growing needs for doing something for the number of cricket teams in the area. If need be I can provide the list of 25 teams that are active in northern Virginia area. I have also cc'ed some of the organizers that have tried to get this going for the past few years. We just don't know where to start.

Seeing cricket as one of the recognized sport in the county forms is a welcoming change. But we propose to the county, to consider laying turf pitches in a few school fields or soccer fields in partnership with cricket teams in the area.

I see one of the proposed changes include developing turf fields for athletic users; it will be nice to see a similar effort for cricket even if county can start a partnership effort at a smaller level as many other counties have done in other parts of the country.

Background of Cricket:

Cricket has been an established team sport for hundreds of years and more than 100 countries are affiliated to the International Cricket Council (ICC), cricket's international governing body. Even though traditionally cricket has been a sport that has had avid following in present and former members of the British Commonwealth, it has managed to catch the interest of residents in the United States. This has led to several organized cricket leagues having sprung up over the last decade across the country as well as the creation of Team USA.

Current Accommodations for Cricket in Fairfax County:

Fairfax County currently has only 2 fields allocated for cricket usage –

1) Lake Fairfax at Reston, VA

This field is home to 3 cricket clubs that operate under the local area league. The county allocates permits on for a 3-hr window on the weekends for others to use this ground.

2) Mark Twain Middle School in Alexandria, VA

This field is home to a cricket club that operates under the local area league as well. The county does not allocate permits to others to use this field.

Current Need for Cricket Fields in Fairfax County:

There are over 25 other teams that are currently engaged in playing cricket in Fairfax County – each with rosters close to 20 players. With nearly 500+ players looking to play cricket on a regular basis on the weekends, Fairfax County really needs to support its cricket playing

residents by allocating more fields for the sport. The limited existing field allocations as mentioned above have unfortunately caused these residents to seek cricket grounds in adjacent counties and even in the state of Maryland.

Future State of Cricket in Fairfax County:

The Washington Metro Cricket League (WMCL) was created to organize the efforts of the cricket teams that have no official home to play cricket at in Fairfax County. The purpose of this particular cricket league is to bring together the cricketing community with the adequate support required from Fairfax County to promote and develop the sport and its enthusiasm.

Since last year the WMCL organizers have been working with Fairfax County personnel towards creating a strategic solution that would address the need for an additional field that can be dedicated for cricket usage. The WMCL organizers feel that even one dedicated additional field will be able to accommodate the needs of these 500+ players on the weekends.

We feel that a partnership with either a middle or elementary school within the Fairfax County public school system will allow us to leverage fields that are not currently being used on the weekends for cricket. This proposal calls for promoting cricket at school sites through youth camps during the week while providing a home to the residents that currently have no field to play at during the weekends. (This approach is similar to what is currently in effect at the Mark Twain cricket field in Alexandria)

Another proposed option that could be considered would be for the Fairfax County park authority to identify a field that is not under any other use and converting it into a dedicated cricket field. (This approach is similar to what is currently in effect at the Lake Fairfax cricket field in Reston)

Unfortunately, we have not had much success to this point with getting the necessary support from Fairfax County but are hopeful that this forum created by the Athletic Council for public comments will be able to understand and address the issues that county residents interested in playing cricket face by not having access to cricket fields in Fairfax County.

The WMCL is willing to partner with Fairfax County to seek out appropriate fields for cricket usage. On behalf of the WMCL Organizing Committee and its members, I would like to thank the Fairfax County Athletic Council for the opportunity to discuss this issue regarding the need for additional cricket fields within the county and hope for additional dialogue around it.

MOU - SCHEDULING

I hope that the county can develop a compromise solution for the MOU that provides determined contributing groups some say on when the 10% is given to other community users. Additionally, perhaps an MOU can be developed for MYS, that provides them 90% usage on the first two fields, 100% usage on the next two fields, then repeat this for the entire 10 or twelve fields. I believe these two items will go a long way in finding a more palatable solution.

The proposal to reallocate the use of privately funded turf fields is totally absurd. Why should any organization be given a free ride on a field that is funded and constructed with private funds. Organizations that put up the money to construct turf fields should be given first priority to use the fields to satisfy their demands. Any time that is not being utilized should then be available to the general public. That is only a fair and reasonable policy. Anything short of that would be a disincentive to an organization to improve fields and leave the County with their current inventory of hazardous fields.

Let some common sense dictate the policy. There should not be any free rides for certain sports that do not take the initiative to raise funds to improve fields. However, out of fairness to all, other sports should be given the opportunity to "share" in the cost of improvements to fields and then all contributing groups should share the field "prime times" on a pro rata basis. This would encourage all sports to begin their own fund raising to improve fields.

I hope that common sense will prevail somewhere along the line.

Please hear our plea. In the Drainsville district, unless you play soccer, you cannot get on a turf field. Current MOUs give soccer first right of refusal, so only soccer is allowed to get on the turf. How these agreements were put into place is astonishing. Money cannot dictate access to the fields. Outsiders from Arlington and Maryland get time on LP-2 via McLean Youth Soccer, yet we, the taxpayers in Fairfax County (not to mention the additional taxes in McLean alone) are not allowed on this public property. Something is VERY wrong. There is obviously some measure of favoritism that allows this to happen.

I appreciate the difficulty in coming up with a draft proposal for artificial turf field allocation that is acceptable to all, and is probably not possible. In any case my concern on this topic relates to the percentages of access being afforded Contributing Community Users. In my opinion, it is way too high! My assessment of this situation stems from the difficulties my adult team has been having getting any time on an artificial field. Despite the fact that members of my team are the very ones that voted for the Bond issue to pay for the fields and actually have to pay the taxes to fulfill the obligations. While it is very commendable that a community youth team has contributed large portions of cash to the cost of establishing a turf field, the amounts in question are by no means 90-95% of the total costs involved in establishing and operating a turf field. There is no justification for a 90-95% allocation entitlement under ANY circumstances. To do so is simply ignoring the total costs involved. To illustrate my point and to use simple approximate numbers we need to have estimates of all costs involved in establishing a turf field. Here is my simple list:

Land	\$2,000,000 (obtained possibly from land records etc.)
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Maintenance	\$50,000 (over 10 years)
Access	\$10,000 (over 10 years)
Security	\$10,000 (over 10 years)
Lighting	\$25,000 (over 10 years)
Turf Field installation	\$750,000 (over 10 years)
Utilities	\$20,000 (over 10 years)
Total	\$2,865,000 (over 10 years)

(assumes a typical turf field life expectancy of 10 years)

These numbers are just estimates and actual numbers or better estimates should be used where available for a specific turf field. By means of an example, if a community youth organization were to contribute \$500,000 to the cost of the turf field installation of \$750,000, there is no way they are entitled to 90% of the access to the field. To do so would be granting the contributing organization the benefit of a leveraged transaction, which is not equitable to the taxpayer. In the above scenario, they have contributed approximately 18% of the total costs involved in establishing and operating a field over 10 years. Even if we concede that my numbers are not all that accurate, the maximum percentage they are likely to achieve is in the region of 20-25% of the total cost, and perhaps a lot less? **It is this percentage of the total annual field allocation time that the Contributing Community organization has successfully procured.** Now this percentage may not be as bad as it might first appear. If we consider a given turf field total availability throughout a year (8am to 11pm daily, assuming it is lighted) we have 5,475 hours. If we assume the contributing organization has successfully procured 20% of the allocation time, they have procured 1,095 hours of exclusive access time that they can use as they deem appropriate, i.e., split between soccer or lacrosse (or whatever?) as long as they are sports approved by CRS. Also the contributing organization is free to choose when (at what times and dates) it uses its 1,095 hours of time. For example, it could allocate all 1,095 hours in the spring season, in which case their effective allocation during this time period is going to be closer to 80%, the rest of the year they have zero priority. The approach described would have to include the impact of any MOUs that modify the available time a field can be used. Should the available time be reduced to 5,110 hours, due to the need to close the field at 10pm each night due to local resident demands, then the portion the contributing organization has successfully procured is now 1,022 hours in the above example (i.e., 20% of 5,110 hours). Once the percentage of time the contributing organization has procured has been determined (and this may involved independent appraisals), and the organization has determined how and when it wants to use its entitlement, the remaining percentage of field hours in any given season has to be allocated according to existing CRS policy. This also means that the contributing organization is still entitled to its pro-rata share of the remaining percentages whatever they may be. In some situations this may well result in the contributing organization receiving a 100% allocation when there is no competing sports or organizations, or it may only receive another 5-10% of additional time according to its pro-rata share or what's left given consideration for those other sports that are competing. The organization may still get close to 90-95% of total allocation time in a given season depending upon how they decide they want to spend their entitlement but it won't and shouldn't be 90-95% for the entire year. There should be no concept of 90% (or any other number) priority scheduling, as this violates the CRS goals of fair and equitable distribution of access. Instead the contributing organization has simply procured exclusive time according to a carefully computed percentage, and they have the right to choose on what dates and times they want to spend it. I think this is a much fairer approach than what has been described and is more equitable to the taxpayer. I have only tried to describe the general approach rather than consider all other factors such as adult/youth availability times etc. which would need to be properly accommodated.

I hope this suggested approach is helpful. As a taxpayer, I for one feel it would be a lot more equitable while still allowing a contributing organization to get what they feel is their entitlement and without creating a leveraged scenario for the benefit of the contributing organization. This approach is also consistent with the BRYC MOU (the only one I have reviewed) in which they are entitled to "...first right of scheduling and usage of Wakefield Park..." wherein this applies to the portion of allocation they have effectively procured.

1. No group should be given 100% of time (first right of scheduling and usage) on a field. The County needs to perform a life-cycle cost analysis of ALL costs associated with a synthetic turf field, and allow first right of scheduling and usage to a group which contributes to the installation of turf only in proportion to its contribution to the TOTAL life cycle cost, not just the installation cost. There are many costs associated with a field other than installation of the turf and those costs are borne by taxpayers who should be given opportunities to use the field. [Examples: Maintenance (including re-spreading top dressing, cleaning/disinfecting the field, trash removal); infrastructure (lights/electricity, road and parking maintenance, toilet facility provision and maintenance); FCPA and DCRS salaries].

The Lewinsville Coalition supports DCRS' effort to give the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) guidance on the content of Memoranda of Understanding governing youth sports organizations' use of Fairfax County athletic fields.

We applaud your thoughtful consideration of the question of whether an organization that pays the entire cost of installing synthetic turf on a County field should have exclusive use of that field. Our answer to that question is an unequivocal 'No.' Our reasons are as follows:

- The cost of installing synthetic turf is a relatively small portion of the total cost of the land and supporting facilities, not to mention the cost of maintenance and the costs to the community in terms of noise, traffic, and so on.

- Soccer is (at this time) the only youth sport that has sufficiently large numbers of participants to be able to afford the cost of installing synthetic turf. If soccer organizations are given exclusive use of such fields, other sports likely will be relegated to poorly maintained fields just because they cannot match the soccer organizations' fund-raising capability.

For these reasons, we recommend that all MOUs governing the use of synthetic turf fields include provisions reserving playing time for groups (whether organized or not) other than those that contributed to the cost of installing the synthetic turf.

The fact that a club can play on a field 100% of the time for 8-10 years after paying for or helping to pay for an artificial turf field is a spectacular return on investment! It's particularly stunning because that club can host tournaments and charge higher membership dues because it is given exclusive use of the field. Somewhere along the way, the County lost sight of the fact that we are talking about private organizations that have turned to the county for a place to play—rather than having to purchase land in order for their organization. In essence, these clubs are hoping to be able to continue the club's operation at a lesser expense to the club. We need to remember that the County is saving these clubs millions of dollars by letting them use County fields—even if the clubs do subsidize the synthetic turf. Additionally, the taxpayers are

paying the costs associated with maintaining these so-call “no-maintenance” turf fields, as well as the costs are incurred when (according to the PA) field use increases by 65 percent. When one compares the price of the turf to the overall purchase price of the parkland and costs of the maintenance and other associated expenses, the turf is a relatively minor expense. Currently, in a situation in the County where taxpayers paid for one-half the cost of the synthetic turf, the club that paid the other half is given right of first scheduling on it—thus leaving the general populous without access to the field (unless it joins the club). I propose the County CALCULATE THE PERCENTAGE THE CLUB PAID TOWARD THE TURF RELATIVE TO THE OVERALL COST OF PURCHAING AND RUNNING THE PARK, THEN ALLOW THE CLUB TO PLAY THAT PERCENTAGE OF THE TIME. If the club wants more playing time, ask them to pay more of the associated expenses. Below is a partial list of those expenses:

- a) The land itself, which the proposed MOU points out is generally 4 to 5 million dollars per park;
- b) The maintenance, striping, and replacement of service roads and parking lots;
- c) The production, maintenance, and replacement of signage;
- d) The collection and removal of refuse;
- e) The installation and maintenance of Port-a-Johns or permanent restroom facilities;
- f) The installation and maintenance of light fixtures and cost of replacement of bulbs;
- g) the payment of electric bills as well as the bill for the company that controls the lights from a remote location;
- h) The maintenance of the field including replacing and re-spreading of the topdressing (a.k.a. blow, group, and spike);
- i) The maintenance of the drainage system, particularly following heavy rains;
- j) The maintenance of the associated park facilities resulting from general increased use;
- k) The PA staff salaries;
- l) The DCRS staff salaries.

I live close to the 37-acre Lewinsville Park in McLean and am concerned about the _leasing arrangements_ between the FCPA and private entities. When I came to live here in 1998, Lewinsville Park was a park. Today it is a sports arena, thanks to an MOU signed between then Supervisor Stu Mendelson and McLean Youth Soccer. The field was installed at the insistence of MYS pending proceedings that went to the Supreme Court in Richmond. The Court's decision vindicated local residents who opposed such a move. I receive weekly updates on LP2 turf field's allocation by simple mandatum of MYS without little or no CRS oversight. I regard this practice as an abuse because it amounts to _exclusive use_. I feel strongly that the use of the field by non-county entities, including for the annual Ambassadors Cup organized by MYS, amounts to disregard of the rules set by the County. MYS makes money by having teams and individuals play, _who do not pay Fairfax Co. taxes_. This lax oversight of Lewinsville Park is a _leasing arrangement_ that goes counter to the purpose for which public parks exist. How many more County parks will be hijacked in this way?

CLUB SIZE: Despite a zero increase in its' local player population, MYS doubled in size over the past four years. Where did all these kids come from? Well, MYS accomplished this, in large part, by stealing elite teams and players from other clubs in order to raise large sums through membership fees. CRS has assisted in MYS's effort by giving it unlimited access to premier facilities.

YOUTH NON-COUNTY FEE

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE DO NOT CHARGE US ANYMORE FEES! WE ALL WANT TO BE ABLE TO ACTUALLY AFFORD TO KEEP OUR CHILDREN INVOLVED IN SPORTS - FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT!

The potential increase to \$20 for players outside of Fairfax county is unfair to those teams like Herndon, who are on the edge of a county (adjoining to Loudon), and who often need to find a few players to fill a competitive team.

This increase would add very little to FC budget, and harm the teams/areas on the edges of the county.

Please do not allow this increase.

Thank you.

Dear Fairfax County,

It is my understanding that Fairfax County is considering raising the out of county field usage fees from \$5.50 to \$25.50 per season. With 3 children involved in Soccer that would cost my family \$120 / year before basketball is even factored in! I live only a few feet from Fairfax County, and do all my business in the county. In these times of runaway inflation it's becoming harder and harder to get my kids to and from all the practices with the rising price of gas. I have coached for 5 years, so I'm really doing my part to help the kids (mostly Fairfax natives). It would be far easier for us to put the kids in the Ashburn or Sterling programs, but we prefer Herndon.

Please don't make the many families who prefer to travel a bit more to play in Fairfax think of you as Unfairfax County.

I understand that you are considering adding an additional fee for athletes on teams who live outside of Fairfax County and am writing to ask you to please NOT add any additional fees. Between the cost of participating on a travel team, the cost of gasoline to get to the many practices, games, tournaments, and so on, it is enough!!
How about welcoming us from other counties rather than making us not want to come? □

On behalf of my family and all other families involved in Fairfax County sports, I would respectfully request that the player fee not be increased.

Please do not increase the athletic fee for out of county residents by an additional \$20.00. I live in Herndon and as a result of living close to the Loudoun County border, my children are on teams that often have out of county players. This is an unfair burden on players and their teams. By charging \$5.50 a sport, the county is already collecting a huge amount of money through its various organizations (HYS, CYA, RYB, etc.) who pass the athletic fee onto its constituent

families. Especially at this critical time when the economy is in a mild recession and the prices of gasoline are sky high, please do not make youth athletics a harder proposition for some families.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

NO MORE CHARGES TO OUR SPORTS TEAMS IN FAIRFAX, PLEASE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I just want you to be clear as to where I stand on additional player fees (\$20.00/player per sport). I think it is outrageous, uncalled for and incredibly unfair to those that use, support and ultimately pay for the recreational services. We pay enough as it is in taxes without being nicked and dimed to death every time we expect to get any service back from the county from which we already pay for.

I think there should be a 20% pay cut from all county employees that make more than \$75,000 a year. That's exactly the way I feel about you trying to constantly double, triple and quadruple user fees every way you can think of to get more money and provide less service to the average taxpayers.

Stop giving everything away to those that neither take care of, or pay for and start doing something for the people who actually PAY YOUR SALARY.

NO ADDITIONAL USER FEES in any context. Enough is enough!

I live in Herndon and my children are involved in multiple sports. Since we are extremely close to Loudoun county, there are Loudoun families who are involved in Herndon teams. I feel that the new fee schedule would be too much money for these families to afford. This seems like an unfair price to pay. Please do not add this additional fee to our teams. Thank you,

I understand that you are proposing to charge players outside the county a \$20 fee for use of Fairfax County athletic facilities and fields. I understand this concept, but I think it does not go far enough. First of all, many travel team players that may not be from this county and are playing in-county for sports also enjoy (for soccer I know) the BEST fields for travel play. So not only are they using our fields, they are using our BEST fields. I think you should charge them more.

I think you SHOULD charge outside players for the use of our facilities and then distribute those funds to the parents who have to haul their kids across town because of increased demand, inefficiencies in assignments, and related costs of traveling halfway across town for a sports practice. Why should the county get the revenue from this increased fee? Parents are most affected by these decisions to take more travel teams on, and by the increased demand on fields and facilities. It is our time and our gas money. As proposed, the county would win and the travel teams would win – only the parents, who are facing further and further drives, are losing.

It has come to my attention that The County is considering raising the field fees from the current rate of \$5.50 to well over \$20. As a parent of four children you must understand that this cost will be excessive for our family as each of my children our involved in year round athletics. The percentage increase is unacceptable and out of sync with the typical cost of living...

Most important, The County needs to keep the fields available for our children. It would be unfortunate, and more costly in the long run, should the increased costs pull kids from organized athletics and "out to the streets."

Please reconsider this increase in cost.

We would oppose any player "tax" for non-Fairfax County residents.

If the County continues to give priority field and gym allocation to teams and organizations with non-County players, a substantial fee (much higher than the \$20 which you mentioned as being under consideration) should be assessed for each non-County player.

What is the basis for the rather minimal proposed charge of \$20 per player per season? That amounts to mere pennies per game for each player. Has DCRS taken into account all the costs Fairfax County incurs in providing and maintaining playing fields in our parks and at our schools? We suggest the County charge a fee of at least \$50 for each non-County player.

Trying to get around [the new residency requirements] with a \$20 fee is an insult to the taxpayer. I calculated this for the team that has 54% non-resident players that plays an average of 5 hours per week in one of the County parks: Each player would play a whopping 33 cents per hour! I pay far more than that each time I go to a County recreation center—and I'm a resident!

FEES: Parents of "elite" players are typically willing to pay much higher fees. This is because their kids have a better shot at getting scholarship money for college, or even eventually playing professionally. Therefore, if non-residents are allowed to use our fields, they should be forced to pay much higher fees (\$100-\$200+).

FIELD ALLOCATION POLICY

Secondly, there are HUGE issues around field and facility locations. We, for instance, live in North Reston near Baron Cameron Park (the major soccer facility in North Reston) and have to go down to Sunrise Valley Elementary School for soccer while Great Falls uses Baron Cameron Park, despite the fact that our entire team is from North Reston. And Lake Fairfax, a mile from us, is used by the TRAVEL teams because of the good condition and turf fields – are they assessed more for the use of better fields or are we all paying the price for kids from all over who are sitting on our travel teams to use our BEST fields?

Similarly, in basketball, our North Reston teams truck down to Dogwood to play – a good 20 minutes away during rush hour -- while Great Falls teams utilize our school gym .5 miles from our house. With greater demand on fields and facilities, there is less flexibility in assignments that make sense. I wish you could take requests for practice fields and facilities and incorporate some “green” decision-making into your assignments. Not only are we spending a tremendous amount of time in the car (needlessly), we are contributing to traffic and pollution and wasting gas at \$4/gallon. This just doesn’t make sense. You should be assigned to a practice field that is central for your team. Or you should be allowed to request practice fields and facilities or play on teams that practice near your home. Or teams should be linked to schools so you can utilize school facilities for soccer, basketball, baseball – imagine the efficiency of time and resources!

Just hard to be stuck in traffic on Reston Parkway or Fairfax County Parkway on your way to basketball practice at a school that is across town while your school that is within walking distance is reserved for the next town over. Just doesn’t make sense.

Below is a document with some thoughts on how you might consider allocation of fields based on size. I have used the soccer numbers in this example because I am obviously most familiar with them.

			Teams per Field - Practice					
	Min	Max	U6	U8	U10	U12	U16	U18
Level 1	100 x 60 (min)	120 x 80	6	4	2	2	2	2
Level 2	40 x 70	90 x 50	4	2	2	2		
Level 3	20 x 45	40 x 60	2	1	1			
Level 4	20 x 20	20 x 35	1	1				
			Teams per Field - Game					
	Min	Max	U6	U8	U10	U12	U16	U18
Level 1	100 x 60 (min)	120 x 80	6	4	2	2	2	2
Level 2	40 x 70	90 x 50	2	2	2			
Level 3	20 x 45	40 x 60	2					
Level 4	20 x 20	20 x 35	2					

Section III.A.2: I suggest that a default set of community use hours for Fairfax County Public School fields (similar to those for FCPA fields described in item A.1) be established in the policy handbook. These default set of times and dates can then be modified by an MOU between the FCPS and CRS that accounts for issues or other concerns raised by local residents impacted by the use of the facility, should they exist. The process to be followed to establish or create the MOU is not described in the document (nor probably should be) but any modifications to dates and times that are described in an MOU should be reflected in an updated table in this section that identifies the facility, the new times and dates and the MOU that was established to achieve the modifications. All MOU's should be made available to the public on the CRS website or some other appropriate location.

Section VII.A.3.a: I do not agree with the logic that Youth primary season sport PRACTICES should be scheduled with higher priority than Adult primary season sport GAMES. In order to play any kind of game it is necessary to have a full size field, with appropriate lines and markings and schedule referees and judges etc. This cannot be said of practices, Youth or otherwise. Practices usually consist of drills, scrimmages and conditioning, none of which require or rely on a full sized field with lines. Practices can and often are scheduled at locations that are simply open grass fields and are perfectly adequate for this purpose. It is not possible to play a properly sanctioned game at anything other than a full sized field or facility. So why do practices take precedence over actual games (Youth or Adult)? I recommend that the order of precedence between items 2 and 3 be reversed. Actual games (Youth or Adult) should always take precedence over practices.

Ditto for Section VII.A.3.b.

Section VII.A.4: I think this section is a potential source of headaches. If I understand the proposed policy correctly, it says that tournaments enjoy a lower priority (priority 4) than sanctioned athletic leagues and organizations (which are priority 3). If this is accurate then why is the deadline for tournament permit requests October 1st when the deadline for the higher priority leagues and organizations is December 1st. This implies that tournaments will be scheduled on facilities long before the leagues and organizations that use them the most consistently have even submitted their requests. This is backward since the higher priority organizations are effectively being penalized by the process being followed. I can personally vouch for this being a real problem as my team was denied permits for 4 weekends (in a 22 week season) due to tournaments that had already been scheduled. This is almost 20% of our games being superseded by a tournament when we are supposed to have the higher priority! Either the deadlines need to be modified to allow the higher priority organizations to submit prior to tournaments, or the priority needs to be changed to correctly reflect the reality that tournaments have a higher priority than sanctioned leagues or organizations. However, I do not agree that this latter scenario is the correct one as tournaments are often one-off events used to raise funds for the very leagues and organizations that use the facilities most consistently. Also the leagues and organizations are nearly always local (and therefore pay Fairfax county taxes) whereas tournaments often attract teams from neighboring states and counties. It would not be equitable for tournaments to have a higher priority than local leagues and organizations.

Section VII.B: This section needs to be reworded or clarified as it is not clear. I believe what it is trying to say is that young adult teams (16 to 19 years) will receive early evening times priority

over adult teams, who can usually play much later. But it is not clear what is intended by this section.

Section VIII.D. Allocation Criteria: Item 7. Any agreement such as an MOU, Adopt-a-field agreement or Friends-of-the-field agreements need to be made public and readily accessible by the teams, organizations and the public. Since these documents modify standard policy for facility use and times, it is important that all understand why the policy has been modified and what it has been modified to. This simple act would go along way to avoiding confrontation on the fields among teams competing for facility resources and between teams and local residents. Clearly there is heated debate on both sides of various issues surrounding field usage and more open communications would go a long way to improving this situation. Such an approach would require a structured approach to creating, modifying and establishing any agreements or MOU's, which is needed in any case.

Section XI.C: A school event should probably be defined as one that creates a conflict for the field resource rather than ANY school event. Obviously one that includes a school play or other activity that does not create a conflict of resources should not qualify. A school play could happily coexist at the same school and should not be used as a reason to cancel a field game.

I believe a more open and publicly available system of managing the permits should be created, one that allows all teams and organizations to know which fields and times have been assigned to which organizations and when etc. Right now the whole process is ad-hoc and somewhat chaotic, and word of mouth and hearsay take the place of a centralized repository of scheduling information that is accessible and available for all to see and use.


Soccer should be both a Spring and Fall primary season sport. I am not aware of any league that has just one or the other and not both.

I have no problem with almost all your proposed changes. My only comments involve the deadlines for applications. The december 1 deadline for spring applications seems particularly early as winter season has only just begun by then and many spring programs get their estimates based on winter program numbers. I would suggest making it a bit later -- at least december 15.

DONATIONS: MYS requires minimum donations from all members. These are both unusual and non-customary fees, thus violating the policy. They also violate IRS laws.

There are times when hour after hour there are four—even six—older youth teams practicing on the same field. It is not unusually to find 70 to 100 people on a field hour after hour. This is happening not because DCRS is allocating field time that way, but rather because the clubs are generating playing schedules for their teams that do not resemble their DCRS allotments. For example, the clubs are allotted time for particular age groups, but clubs are redistributing the times to other age groups—giving short shrift to the age groups that were originally allotted the hours. In other cases, clubs are allotted time for a particular number of teams to be on the field each hour (generally two, but for the very young, four to six), but clubs are putting more than that number of teams on the field. THE JUGGLING OF FIELD ASSIGNMENTS BY CLUBS TO

FAVOR PARTICULAR TEAMS OR AGE GROUPS, OR TO GIVE TEAMS MORE THAN THEIR ALLOTTED TIME, SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED. In my first example, it deprives the players receiving the allocations the County entitles them to. In my second examples, it causes safety issues, overtaxes the park facilities, and disrupts the neighborhood.



POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

I attended the public meeting on June 24, 2008 regarding proposed Field and Gym Allocation Policy Changes and the Draft Turf Field MOU. I live in McLean Hunt Estates, a community of 60 homes adjacent to the eastern border of Spring Hill Park. I am the President of the McLean Hunt Estates Civic Association and hence am very watchful of policies and developments which will potentially impact our community. Two synthetic turf fields are presently under construction at Spring Hill Park and there are other fields in Spring Hill Park and at Spring Hill School across the street which may ultimately be targeted for synthetic turf. How the fields are allocated will have repercussions for the surrounding community, and decisions about which other fields will be turfed in the future will have significant impact upon my neighbors. I assume that citizens in other locations living near athletic fields have a comparable level of interest regarding activity level and development in their neighborhoods.

Input from citizens not affiliated with one or more athletic organizations is essential for balanced policy decisions regarding public spaces. Only by chance did I learn of the proposed field allocation policies and draft MOU and the opportunity to comment upon them. The meetings were not well advertised, and I was not notified by the Dranesville Supervisor's staff or by the Dranesville FCAC representative, even though the Supervisor's office has an e-mail list of HOA leaders which is used extensively for communication of items of community interest.

Thus, I suspect the general community will be under-represented in the comments you receive. Admittedly many of the policy provisions under consideration are of interest primarily to athletic groups and organized users of fields and gyms, but the policies do have an impact on the larger community which should be fully included in these and future deliberations. I hope you will take further steps to gather input from this important population regarding the policies under review and that you will improve communication with the general community in the future.

First and foremost, Fairfax County seems not to realize that the general community voice is an important one in making decisions regarding our parks. When I say that, I am not referring to the athletic community, which by its nature, is already assembled and easily rallied. In essence, each athletic group is a lobbying group of sorts—and they often call on other athletic groups to present a united front for change. **WHAT THE COUNTY DOES NOT SEEM TO BE HEARING ARE THE VOICES OF CONSTITUENTS WITHOUT AN ATHLETIC AFFILIATION.** I think the content of the individual comments need to be balanced against those staged by the athletic groups.

Also, the County needs to be cognizant of **CREEPING INCREMENTALISM REGARDING CHANGE FAVORING THE ATHLETIC CLUBS IN OUR PARKS.** In looking at records going back to the 1970s regarding the park near my home, there is a pattern: a) Meetings are held where athletic groups lobby for change in a park; b) Opposing these changes are smaller numbers of general community voices; c) The county announces that particular changes will be made which favor the athletic community; d) The neighborhood rallies to stop the changes; e) The County presents a "compromise," giving the athletic community only a portion of what they asked for; f) Time passes and the athletic groups lobby again for the change that was denied; g) The cycle starts again with the community losing a little each time.

Now we are reviewing three new documents—all put together by the Fairfax County Athletic Council (FCAC). Though each Board of Supervisors representative appoints a representative to the FCAC, many of those appointees have current or prior relationships with a sports entity. (The representative from the district I live in said he has met with a neighborhood association only once in the over 5 years he has served—but he is in constant contact with the athletic groups.) Additionally, each sport sends a representative, and there is no question about their bias. Therefore, we are looking at three documents that were generated by a special interest group without benefit of input from the general, non-athletic community. Sort of like letting your tenant decide the rules on your rental property. One of the documents states, “We have considered comments from all interested parties,” but I beg to differ. Bottom line, THESE PROPOSED DOCUMENTS HAVE A “BACKROOM” FEEL TO THEM. Bringing the community in at the eleventh hour with just days notice on the public meetings seems more like “going through the motions.” Next week the County will undoubtedly issue a press release about how involved the community was in the process because six (badly advertised/poorly attended) public meetings were held. Community-wide participation from the beginning seems like a far better approach.

FCAC: The FCAC is comprised of only representatives from the various sports & districts. It has no representation from county residents, coaches, referees, volunteers, parents, etc.. For example, the FCSC (Soccer Council) only holds meetings that are unannounced and behind closed doors. Club administrators make up 100% of the FCSC membership.

TAXPAYERS: Many of us have been residents and taxpayers of the county for years. Are the individuals who are drafting these field policies (CRS's employees) also residents of Fairfax County? If not, how could they possibly understand or care about these issues?

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

Residency requirement: Leave as is or, better yet, make it tighter.

* In McLean and throughout the County we have been hearing for years about a shortage of fields and gyms for "our" players. Adopting an allocation policy which allows more non-County players to receive priority playing time on County facilities increases the need for such facilities to accommodate County players. County tax payers foot the bill for the land, maintenance, infrastructure, and management of these facilities. Why should field/gym time be given to teams with non-County players?

* Whatever allowable percentage of non-County players is decided upon should be applied to each and every team, not the aggregate of all players from all teams in a club.

I disagree that clubs that meet the overall residency requirement should be able to field teams that do not meet the residency requirement. For at least two years now, this has been happening in Fairfax County. The clubs know they are in violation of the policy, but DCRS explains, "This is the only way they can be competitive." Fairfax County Schools do not allow non-resident students enroll in our county schools without paying thousands of dollars in tuition. Why should ANY TEAM WITH A NON-RESIDENT PLAYER(S) BE GIVEN PRIORITY SCHEDULING ON FAIRFAX COUNTY FIELDS. (If this practice would stop, the County could more of its resources for in-county players or for "casual use" for the nearby community.) DCRS will say this is unenforceable. I argue that the County needs to get the clubs to commit to self-enforcing this rule. After all, we are talking about organizations that presumably teach good sportsmanship to our children.

The 6/2/2008 draft of the Field Allocation Policy would make a significant change to Section V.A.2., which sets forth the youth sports residency requirement. The current policy requires 90 percent of participants from each youth organization and 90 percent of participants from each youth team (including those within organizations) to be residents of Fairfax County. The proposed change would remove the latter requirement, at least as it applies to youth teams within organizations. Thus, organizations with significant numbers of non-County residents on so-called elite or travel teams would comply with the residency requirement if they field enough other teams (most likely in younger age groups) composed predominantly of County residents.

We question why field allocation priority is given to any teams whose membership includes children who are not Fairfax County residents. If any change is to be made to the residency requirement, it should be a revision to prohibit participation by non-County residents. Children who live outside Fairfax County can and should participate in athletic programs where they live and where their parents pay taxes. Such a change could be phased in over a period of two or three years so that it does not cause undue disruption. We recognize the validity of an exception to the residency requirements for tournaments at appropriate times, provided that applications for them are submitted in a timely manner and with complete information about the tournaments.

When playing time on Fairfax County fields is allocated, why should teams that include non-County residents receive as high a priority as teams made up entirely of County residents?

What is the justification for such an arrangement for the use of fields that were acquired and are maintained entirely or largely with Fairfax County tax revenue? Even where private groups perform some maintenance of natural turf or pay all or part of the cost of installing synthetic turf, Fairfax County taxpayers also pay some, perhaps the lion's share, of the costs of field maintenance (including the maintenance of synthetic turf fields), as well as the entire cost of installing and maintaining light fixtures and replacing bulbs, electricity, trash removal, installing and building and maintaining roads and parking lots, the salaries of DCRS and Park Authority staff, and so on. In addition, Fairfax County residents living near playing fields must bear the burden of the traffic, noise, and other disruptions associated with athletic activities on those fields.

It seems especially questionable to allow participation by non-county residents when sports organizations within the County constantly complain that there are not enough playing fields for 'our' players and insistently advocate installation of synthetic turf in order to maximize playing time on existing fields.

When DCRS was asked last year to explain why participation by non-County residents is allowed on McLean Youth Soccer (MYS) teams, DCRS responded that some of those players live closer to a Fairfax County field than one in their own County. That rationale obviously could not and did not account for the significant numbers of players coming from great distances—even from out of the State—to play on MYS teams. At the first public meeting you held on the proposed changes to the Field Allocation Policy, the question was raised once again. This time, the answer was that clubs need to recruit from outside the County to be competitive. When a DCRS staff member was asked whether that means Fairfax County taxpayers are footing the bill for non-County participation so that clubs can have winning teams, the answer was 'Yes.'


That is not a compelling justification for allowing non-County participation in youth sports that use County fields and facilities. Many of us, as soccer parents, have seen that it is the parents, far more than the children, who are obsessed with winning and fielding 'competitive teams.' Youth sports programs have many potential benefits and, for that reason, The Lewinsville Coalition wholeheartedly supports them. But when youth sports groups are run by parents who value winning and elite status over everything else, even if so-called competitiveness requires participation by non-County residents, such sports groups forfeit their right to community support.

Your own data, which Jesse Ellis sent to Ms. Liz Rothrock on April 25, 2008, show that many MYS teams do not meet the second part of the existing residency requirement. The text of his message to Ms. Rothrock is attached, with annotations showing the percentage of County residents on each team. None of the 22 teams covered by the data was in compliance with the existing policy. The proposed change to the Field Allocation Policy would allow MYS to come into compliance without any action on its part. That will happen because the very large numbers of County residents on teams of young children (as young as 4-years old) will dilute the statistical effect of non-county players on other teams. Thus, MYS would easily satisfy the requirement for 90 percent residency as an organization even though far fewer than 90 percent of the players on many teams will be Fairfax County residents.

If DCRS is unwilling to tighten the residency requirements, you should at least leave them as they now stand, rather than making the proposed change, which would have the effect of increasing the number of non-County residents playing on County fields. If you are going to continue to allow participation by non-County residents, the charge for each one should be

substantial.

BOND REFERENDUMS: When taxpayers agreed to a \$10 million bond referendum they also agreed to pay for the associated debt. There is a basic assumption that the bond funds are to be used for the benefit of county residents only, and with an underlying belief that the existing policies surrounding the use of the funds are being strictly enforced. This has not been the case, and consequently, the taxpayers have been misled.



MOU REQUIREMENTS

If the suggestion above is not adopted, then no group should be allowed to be the sole contributor to synthetic turf on a field. It is unfair for an organization with a constituency financially able to pay high fees to essentially “buy” full control of public land. Our parks are for everyone, not just a select group of highly organized and financially able users. Perhaps the County could require that any public/private partnership consist of a consortium of sports groups, to avoid favoring one sport over others.

Limit the number of fields to which one organization can contribute all or a substantial portion of the funding for turf. One well-funded sport or club should not be allowed to control all the fields in a geographic area.

Installation of synthetic turf on public land should be subject to a Master Plan process. I am encouraged that the draft MOU proposal recommends an open and transparent process for selecting fields for development. All too often in the past, the decision has been made by the public/private partners and announced either with no public discussion, or too far into the transaction for meaningful public input. However, the proposal to require a public announcement of the intention to develop fields with a 60-day comment period, while a step in the right direction, is insufficient given the high level of impact that synthetic turf has on the use of a field and hence on the park or school and the nearby community. Decisions to install synthetic turf, either by the County or via a public/private partnership, should be subject to a complete review of the impact on the entire park (or school) and surrounding community. The only way to assure a full review and a sound decision is to require a Master Plan review when synthetic turf is proposed for a field.

The MOU should state that contributing organization(s) may not schedule events for the purpose of fund raising, such as professional exhibition games or publicity events.

The MOU should specify how time slots not used for team play or practices by the contributing organization(s) will be used.

The proposed recommendations for the MOU include arranging for community meetings before installing synthetic turf fields. This is not good enough! With synthetic turf, we are talking about a major change to a park. Installing lights in a park is a Master Plan requirement, so why is it not a requirement for synthetic turf? Possibly because synthetic turf was not used at the local level when the Master Plan process was initiated, but most likely because the Park Authority (PA) Board voted it down several years ago because, according to the PA and my PA Board rep, “the process would be too time consuming and would delay the installation of synthetic turf fields.” To my way of thinking, the decision to install synthetic turf in a park *should be* time-consuming and well thought out. I have lived next to a field that only had lights and I have lived next to a park that had a synthetic turf field, and there is no doubt in my mind that SYNTHETIC TURF HAS MORE OF AN IMPACT ON A PARK AND ITS SURROUNDINGS THAN LIGHTS DO. Anything short of making synthetic turf part of a park’s Master Plan is irrelevant.

Past MOAs/MOUs have caused much confusion, and therefore, should:

- a) Clearly state which Field Allocation policies do and do not apply to clubs with MOUs.
- b) Define “camps” and “clinics” as they apply to clubs with MOUs.
- c) Clearly state what the clubs with MOUs should do with their unused timeslots, who is eligible for receiving them, and how they will be fairly allocated by DCRS—and what the penalty is if the clubs don’t release them or release them directly to other clubs.

The following should be prohibited by future MOUs:

- a) Allowing clubs with MOUs to grandfather of policies and practices on the field once the county has officially changed them.
- b) Allowing clubs with MOUs to schedule events during their allotted timeslots for the sole purpose of doing fundraising (e.g., the Ambassador Cup) or for the benefit of for-profit groups.

The MOUs should require that:

- a) The clubs signing MOUs assume responsibility for all maintenance costs on the synthetic turf, its apron, and its drainage system.
- b) The County arrange for and obtain the results of an annual, independent audit on activities (financial and otherwise) of the clubs signing the MOUs.

TURF FIELD ALLOCATION GUIDELINES

During a meeting with Community and Recreational Services on 15 August 2008, it was noted that the artificial turf field at West Springfield High School (WSHS) is being counted in both the overall field allocation for SYC and the overall allocation of turf fields to SYC. This is occurring despite the fact that the Turf Field Allocation Guidelines on the www.fairfaxcounty.gov website clearly indicates that these fields will be not be governed by this policy but will be governed by the MOU instead. SYC requests that either the policy and/or its current application be modified.

I can accept the fact that the WSHS artificial turf field should be counted against SYC in the overall field allocation. Despite parochial concerns to the contrary, that is in accordance with the MOU. However, I strongly disagree that the WSHS field should be counted against the artificial turf field allocation to SYC.

First of all, SYC paid in full for the artificial turf on the WSHS field. There was no county money involved. The artificial turf field allocation policy should, in our view, only apply to artificial turf fields that have been funded by the county. Additionally, the hours that are being counted against our overall allocation by CRS on the WSHS field only exist because SYC entered a private-public agreement with FCPS finance the WSHS artificial turf field project. Without the MOU, those hours, artificial turf or regular turf hours at WSHS, would not be available to SYC or anyone else who are allocated fields by CRS. SYC has, through our MOU, increased both the number of hours and the quality of fields available to the County. I, personally, do not feel we should be penalized on either account, but I find it an egregious error that SYC should be penalized on both our overall field allocation and our turf field allocation because we chose to enter into our MOU with FCPS and fully fund the artificial turf installation.

If you are interested in promoting rather than discouraging private-public partnerships, I strongly urge you to revise this policy so that an organization that increases both the overall hours available for allocation and the quality of the fields is not penalized on both accounts as long as county funds are not involved in improving the quality of those fields.

ENFORCEMENT AND DISCRETION

Regarding the Athletic Field Policy, I have been observing the implementation of the current policy in the field behind my house since 2004. I can tell you with certainty that the current policy has not been enforced. The Department of Community and Recreation Services (DCRS) does not deny this, but says that it was hoping the FCAC would review the policy. Therefore, before, during, and after the review (a period of about two years), DCRS decided the policy would not be enforced. As a result, the County has no data on which to evaluate the effectiveness of the current policy—there is no baseline. It is important that the policies BE CLEARLY STATED AND STRICTLY ENFORCED, regardless of who likes or dislikes them, and regardless of whether they are under review or not. Current violations to the field policy include:

- For-profit clubs being provided priority scheduling on the athletic fields.
- Clubs being given priority field time, then passing it to clubs that do not have priority status.
- Clubs being given priority field time, then scheduling teams in their clubs that do not meet the residency and/or non-profit requirements.
- Applications, rosters, and fees for tournaments, as well as for regular play, not being submitted at all/in a timely manner/in a complete fashion.
- Clubs being scheduled for tournaments when they miss the application deadlines.
- Clubs scheduling multiple teams per hour on a field when the slot is allocated to only one team.

The County needs to keep in mind that the policies are put in place NOT JUST TO PROTECT/BENEFIT THE ATHLETIC GROUPS, BUT ALSO TO PROTECT/BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY. Recently, DCRS received an application for a major tournament *seven months* after it was due. DCRS went ahead and scheduled the tournament with one-month lead time. A DCRS representative indicated DCRS always does this regardless of the tardiness of the form because it is in the best interest of the club—thus admitting they repeatedly violate the policy. DCRS obviously did not take into consideration what is in the best interest of the community. They neglected the fact that weddings, picnics, graduation parties, sales, fairs, etc., may have been planned in the neighborhood long in advance of the last minute tournament. Many other policies have fallout for the neighborhood when they are violated. This needs to be kept in mind as new policies are considered and those decided upon are enforced.

DCRS must enforce whatever policies are adopted. Numerous violations of existing policies were cited at the public meeting I attended. Large clubs in particular seem to manipulate the policies to serve their own interests. Violations of policies not only impact other athletic groups; they impact surrounding communities, particularly in the case of fields.

DCRS says it does not have the manpower to police County the fields for violations. In fact, it was DRCS's Director Franckewitz who initiated the request to have aspects of the policies revised for that reason. Therefore, it is apparent that THE NEW POLICY HAS TO BE CLEAR AND CONCISE AND EASILY ENFORCEABLE. I feel that it is not. Also, the County also has to be able to rely on the athletic clubs to self-police. It is unclear at this point that it can.

Regardless of whether and how the Field Allocation Policy is modified, The Lewinsville Coalition requests that it be strictly enforced. There is no reason to have a policy if it is not enforced, as it has not been in recent years, and perhaps never.

POLICIES: These policies are supposed to apply to everyone, but they don't. Exceptions are routinely made for the county's "partners" (eg, MYS), but the policy doesn't mention this anywhere. Therefore, anyone who reads the policy is not aware of these exceptions.

ENFORCEMENT: Once these policies are changed, what assurances do we have that they will be enforced? They clearly haven't been enforced in the past.

CRS DIRECTOR: Lied to us last year by saying that we were not wasting our time by bringing problems to CRS's attention. As it turns out, not only were we wasting our time, but CRS continued to waste even more of our time by: a) Saying they would fix the problems; b) Telling us to review all of the policies (knowing full well that they aren't enforced); c) Choosing not to punish numerous blatant violations of the policies; and d) Forgetting to tell us that the policies, in many cases, didn't apply to groups such as MYS.

IMPLEMENTATION: Should be spelled out in a separate section, and not left up to the Director's discretion.

SECTIONS II.A. & II.B.: These contradict each other regarding the implementation of the policies.

SECTION V.2.: CRS doesn't verify the residency information provided, thus making this section completely meaningless.

I am concerned about this caveat, and ones similar to it, that appear several times in both the old and proposed policies: "The CRS Director has the authority to make changes to the allocation formula, season dates, primary/secondary sport designations, practice/game allocations, and fee charges as usage and field availability change, and to interpret and determine appropriate procedures for implementation of the policy." WHY BOTHER WITH A POLICY IF ONE PERSON CAN OVERTURN IT? When I brought recent policy violations to the attention of the Deputy County Executive, he basically said the department director can do what she wants. Where are the checks and balances in that?

OTHER

ALLOCATIONS: MYS threatened to withdraw from field development if forced to surrender some field use. What does this tell you about their motives?

PARTNERSHIPS: MYS, etc. are "Partners" of the FCPA/CRS. By definition, doesn't this seriously affect the impartiality of FCPA/CRS?

OTHER COUNTIES: What do other counties charge for the use of their premier fields? (ie, Arlington, DC, Montgomery, etc.)