

Turf Field Development and Scheduling MOUs: Public Comments and FCAC Responses

Topic	Comment	FCAC Response
Open & Transparent Process	An open process will allow for meaningful public input and eliminate back-door deals.	We agree that a public comment period would allow for meaningful public input and transparency as to the intentions of all parties. The public comment requirement has been incorporated into the proposed policy as section I.E.
Open & Transparent Process	A 60-day comment period is not adequate, given the impact of turf fields. The conversion of fields to synthetic turf should be subject to the Master Plan process so that residents can comment on their impact.	As reflected in section I.E, we believe that 30 days is sufficient time for the public to organize and give their opinion (30 days is the standard length of time for FCPA comment periods), provided that they are properly notified. As the Master Plan process is a Park Authority process, this policy cannot address that; however, CRS accept comments on all aspects of proposed MOUs, including the impact of the conversion on the community.
Open & Transparent Process	Groups with intentions of funding turf fields should disclose those intentions to the FCPA, CRS, and FCAC and a draft MOU should be made available to the FCAC 60 days before signing.	Reasonable notice should be provided to all County entities, and implementation of section I.E will ensure they are in receipt of the proposals.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	Contributing users should have some say on which hours are given to other users.	CRS will make the final decision, in order to ensure fairness and equity in scheduling; however they will consult with the contributing user before making a decision. Groups that have been through this process on current fields have stated that they were thoroughly involved in the process.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	If an organization develops multiple fields, the percentage of reservation time could be phased out or alternated (e.g., 90% on first two fields, 100% on next two, etc.).	The amount of reservation time should remain constant for all fields. However, the FCAC is working with CRS to develop a mini-grant program that will encourage the development of multiple fields through cost savings.

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Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	The proposed reservation time gives groups an opportunity to “free ride” on the efforts of groups that put in the time and effort to raise funds to convert fields and provides a disincentive to partnering.	The incentives provided through concurrent FCAC initiative regarding the mini-grant program and through the potential changes to the Turf Field Allocation Guidelines (which will only count a portion of allocated time towards a contributing user’s turf field total) will somewhat mitigate, we believe, the benefits of not contributing to turf development by increasing the county contribution to turf development. Additionally, the basic premise of the reservation time reflects the fact that these fields are public property with public costs that are greater than those of field conversion alone.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	Money should not dictate the allocation of fields. At this point, it is generally only soccer clubs that can afford it.	It has always been County policy that participation levels dictate allocation, but that private contribution (money) affects which fields are allocated to whom. County policy and the proposed mini-grant program encourage private contributions to field improvements by offering use-based incentives.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	100% of the cost of converting a field should not equate to 100% of the allocated space, as there are many other costs to the county associated with that field, such as infrastructure, land, maintenance, utilities, etc. The synthetic turf field cost itself may only be ¼ of the total.	The basic premise of the reservation time reflects the fact that these fields are public property with public costs that are greater than those of field conversion alone.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	“First right of scheduling” is essentially exclusive use and should be treated as such and not be the basis of these MOUs.	The reservation time being implemented will ensure that “first right of scheduling” does not end up unintentionally becoming exclusive use in practice.

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Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	Access to turf fields gives clubs a competitive advantage (e.g., attracting top players, hosting tournaments), leading to a cycle of “the rich get richer” if other groups are not given access to fields.	The reservation time works in tandem with the Turf Field Allocation Guidelines to ensure that groups are given equitable access to turf fields.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	Fields should be scheduled per the Field Allocation Policy.	Section I.C requires all contributing users to abide by the Field Allocation Policy.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	If a group has traditionally had the full allocation of a field and funds the field’s conversion to turf, the reservation time means that the group would be spending a lot of money to get less time on the field.	Contributing users will actually increase their time on the field, as they no longer have to adhere to Park opening and closing dates. The field will now be open year round. Fewer rain outs will occur, which will increase the traditional amount of field availability.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	Even if one club is assigned use of a field, they are serving participants from many clubs during games and tournaments.	Only the “home” club has control over how the allocated space is used; the reservation time ensures allocations are fairly distributed.
Field Scheduling: Time Reserved for Other Community User Groups	Groups should receive space based on the amount of funding they contribute to the turf field conversion (e.g., 100% of funding = 100% of space, 90% of funding = 90% of funding).	It has always been County policy that participation levels dictate allocation, but that private contribution (money) affects which fields are allocated to whom. County policy and the proposed mini-grant program encourage private contributions to field improvements by offering use-based incentives. However, the basic premise of the reservation time reflects the fact that these fields are public property with public costs that are greater than those of field conversion alone.

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Partnerships	No group should be allowed to be the sole contributor, as this excludes groups and sports that cannot afford to participate. Partnerships consisting of multiple sports should be required.	The proposed reservation of time policy encourages partnerships, as partnerships reduce the number of groups CRS must accommodate through reserving time. Furthermore, the contributing users will exercise greater control over their scheduled use time than if CRS needs to utilize the full 20% of reserved time for other groups. Plus, partnerships help to reduce the financial burden on the contributing users.
Partnerships	Other groups should be given the opportunity to share in the cost of turf field development and receive a share of the field allocation.	The public comment period (Section I.C) will help in the identification of potential partners.
Turf field development	Groups should be limited in the number of fields they can develop, so that a single group cannot control all fields in an area.	The incentives to partner (as explained above under the Partnerships topic), the public comment period (section I.C), and the provision for providing acceptable replacement fields (section I.H), plus the Field Allocation Policy in general, all serve to help ensure that a single organization cannot control all fields in an area.
Field use	<p>Contributing organizations should not be able to schedule fund-raising or for-profit events on the field.</p> <p>The MOU should contain provisions about how the field will be used during times not allocated to contributing organizations.</p> <p>The MOU should clearly state how unused timeslots will be reallocated to other community users.</p>	These issues are all addressed in the Field Allocation Policy, which contributing users will be required to abide by.

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Field Allocation Policy	The MOU should clearly state which Field Allocation Policy clauses apply to the contributing users and which do not.	This is explained in section I.C.
Field Allocation Policy	Clubs should not be able to be “grandfathered” and not have to follow updated policy decisions made after the MOU is signed.	A MOU is a contract and cannot be changed by a new policy that is approved only by one party to the contract.
Field Allocation Policy	The MOU provisions should take precedence over the primary season rules of the Field Allocation Policy.	This is explained in section I.C.
Camps and Clinics	Camps and clinics should be well-defined as they apply to contributing organizations.	This is defined in the Field Allocation Policy, and new language is being proposed that will further clarify this (section III.D of the Field Allocation Policy).
Maintenance	Contributing organizations should be responsible for all maintenance associated with the field.	As these fields remain the property of the original owner (e.g., FCPA), the owner should determine who is responsible for maintenance on fields.
Audits	The County should obtain an annual independent audit on the activities (financial and operational) of the contributing organizations.	The termination clause provides reason for groups to monitor implementation of the agreement; a formal audit should not be necessary.
MOU Term	The duration of the MOU should not exceed the lesser of 10 years or the expected useful life of the field.	This is explained in section I.J.
Turf Field Development Process	The county should not consider the existence of privately funded fields when considering where to place new publicly-funded fields, as this penalizes a community’s chance of receiving publicly-funded fields.	CRS and the FCPA take into account all relevant factors when deciding where to place fields, including need, field locations, and amenities. Type of funding may be considered, but only after community needs are first addressed.

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Turf Field Development Process	The county should facilitate private fundraising through matching-funds programs, naming rights and other promotional considerations, and voluntary fee increases to the county.	The FCAC is proposing a mini-grant program to partially address this. FCPS and the FCPA are examining naming rights and other promotional considerations.
Turf Field Development Process	The county should identify opportunities to reduce the costs of developing turf fields.	FCPA, FCPS, and the FCAC have been and will continue to search for cost-saving opportunities.
Turf Field Allocation Guidelines	The current guidelines serve as a disincentive to private funding of fields, as a group funding a field will quickly use up its allocated time.	The specific scheduling provisions of the MOU supersede the Turf Allocation Guidelines, so that groups contributing to turf field development (particularly those contributing to more than one field) will, likely more often than not, receive more turf field space than recommended under the guidelines. Additionally, the proposed changes to the guidelines will only count a portion of the allocation toward a contributing user's total.