

**Notes from Public Comment Meeting  
June 9, 2008**

*Regarding the residency requirements:*

Homeowners and taxpayers are not comfortable with hosting non-county players on our fields. We, as taxpayers, pay up to \$5 to \$7 million per park to support infrastructure, maintenance (even turf fields require maintenance), light installation, and electricity. Yet we have some teams, mostly composed of players from Maryland, practicing on these fields 5 hours per week.

*Regarding the non-resident fee:*

This fee should be much higher than \$20 per person. At this rate, it amounts to about 30 cents per day for many of these players.

*Regarding the MOU guidelines (and policy-making in general):*

The community as a whole (not just those representing athletic organizations) should be brought into the decision-making process regarding policies and plans for our public facilities.

Turf fields should be incorporated into park master plans. This is the only way to protect the neighborhood – by giving the citizenry a greater voice. Lights need to be in master plans, but in many ways, turf is more invasive than lights, as it spawns more activity. There is no down time on turf fields, as they become “magnets” for use. Adding a turf field changes the facility from being a neighborhood park to an athletic facility.

**Notes from Public Comment Meeting  
June 10, 2008**

*Regarding the MOU guidelines – “holdback”:*

The language regarding the “holdback” needs to be clarified. For example, what does “initially allocated” mean?

My group has always gotten 100% of the use on a field nobody else ever wanted (even we don't want it). But if we pay to convert it to turf, others will get space there? That penalizes me for my investment. In addition, if I turf the field, it will lessen my need for (and presumably my allocation of) other grass fields. So you'd be penalizing me twice.

Because of the holdback, groups would get fewer benefits than they do under the Adopt-a-Field program

There is a big difference between fully funding a field and partnering with the county. The holdback should reflect that.

Our groups benefit the county by running these youth programs. Our coaches are all volunteers. But if we raise the money to turf a field, we become less entitled to the field. Others can sit by and wait for us to fund it. Why favor one group over another?

Five hours out of every one hundred (a 5% holdback) doesn't seem unreasonable to me.

We don't own the land. Even a partnership does not give us ownership of the land. The fields are not ours and will never belong to us. Maybe we should consider a lease agreement with diminishing guaranteed amounts of use over the years.

I think 90-95% is fair.

90% is a pretty good return. Some areas of the county have walk-on issues where you're fighting for your own allocated space. And you don't have to buy the land – that's a key factor.

If you're the only group that's ever used the field, then you put in all the money to turf it, it's not unreasonable to expect that you'd still get all of the space. Otherwise, there's not much point in the investment and groups will be discouraged from putting in the money. There are lots of fields (especially crappy ones) that have always been assigned just to soccer.

The holdback options discriminate against single-sport groups. What is a group has just one sport playing in a given season? Even multiple-sport groups have other organizations in the same geographic area that could benefit from the turf fields. You should have the same minimum guarantee of space for all groups.

It raises a red flag when talking with parents and other donors about the holdback.

Through ODSL, WAGS, NCSL, and other leagues, kids from many different clubs get the opportunity to play on the turf fields.

10% of 39 weekly community use hours is just 3.9 hours. This holdback clause is causing a lot of bad blood over just 3.9 hours.

Our energy needs to be directed to adding new turf fields. With more fields, our problems will go away. You claim we need to encourage private investment, but this proposal creates disincentives to investing and disincentives to partnership, as other groups can free-ride. I think the proposal is well-intended but it is the wrong thing to do.

The contributors want the county to say “Thank you. How can we help you?” But this document is designed to protect those who don’t participate, or to protect the minority from the majority.

I don’t think anyone would contribute \$1.8 million to get to use \$1.5 million worth of space.

Can we give the funding group the option to determine which 10% of the time is scheduled to other users?

The county has been very good with working with us to determine how the other time is scheduled.

Could the specific times be specified in the MOU?

A turf field should not sit empty if we are not using it.

Why doesn’t the county automatically put 10% of the money into all of these fields?

*Regarding the MOU guidelines – open process:*

We endorse transparency and openness, reaching out to others. There should be guidelines as to how this is done.

*Regarding the MOU guidelines in general:*

The fight it takes to put these (turf fields) in is discouraging.

We should have user groups get together to develop the MOUs, so that the representatives are people that have this experience. This document isn’t creative enough – we need to draw on more people’s knowledge.

*Regarding turf field development:*

Privately-funded fields shouldn’t be considered when determining the next publicly-funded fields.

There should be more open comment on which fields are selected for public funding.

We need to revisit field size standards. Most of these fields are too narrow for soccer.

We need to ask the FCAC to set a goal of 100 turf fields in 5 years. This will require a channeling of creativity, ideas, and leadership.

*Regarding turf field allocations:*

As we build more fields, the number of hours groups are supposed to get on turf goes up. Building fields creates another disincentive – you quickly fill your full allocation of turf time.

How does historical use play into this? If I have 55% of the players in my area, should I get 55% of the time?

*Regarding the non-county fee for youth:*

I'm opposed to the fee.

I support the residency requirement change, but not the fee. It's easier for kids to play with my group than with Loudoun County. We offer scholarships, funded solely by our club. This is punitive to kids who live on the border. I have lots of kids at the rec level who live over the border.

Do other jurisdictions charge youth?

The revenue will be just \$20-30,000. That's not a big deal.

Turn your attention to walk-ons and get their money before trying to get money from kids.

This is a horrible policy. The county shouldn't put up barriers to kids participating in programs.

You're hurting the kids and leaving the walk-ons alone.

We're very happy with the 90% residency requirement. The fee isn't palatable, though.

*Regarding allocation formulas:*

Why do lacrosse players get more hours of practice than soccer players?

Why are there only 2 U6 lacrosse teams per field? They can't throw the ball that far.

**Notes from Public Comment Meeting  
June 12, 2008**

Allocation Policy

1. Supports the idea of going from 90% per team to 90% per Organization
2. Need to clarify language for the 75% per team. Makes no sense at all and very confusing. Suggest taking it out completely.
3. \$20.00 non county youth fee- opposed to this. Should not charge youth period. We are controlling the out of county's with the 90% rule. If we accept them under the 90% rule then they should not be treated differently.
4. Field Size? Why is field size not considered in the policy when allocating space? It should be considered and an appropriate allocation factor should be given to different sizes of fields.
5. Why isn't field quality addressed in the policy? It should be!

Turf Field MOU

1. How many non turfed fields in the county are exclusively for one sport? A lot
2. This new proposed policy directly conflicts with Adopt a Field and Friends of the Field Policy's.
3. Is this good Policy for the County?
  - County is looking to increase the number of turf fields and this proposal is an inhibitor of that
  - gives a disincentive for groups to partner with the county
5. Every sport is treated equally however.....
  - soccer makes up 83% of the field sport population
  - all other sports make up 17%
  - there will be many fields that are in fact exclusively soccer because of their large numbers. This needs to be addressed.
6. Fairness and Reasonableness
  - is this fair policy
  - the perception of one club, one sport rubs people the wrong way
  - \$4 million for the land is a false concept and argument
7. Pie splitting instead of pie enlarging
8. If a group puts in 100% of the funding then they should get 100% of the space. Anything less is UNFAIR.

9. MYS is landlocked and the only way to increase space for all of their kids is to build Turf fields
10. With this policy, the smaller entities are just sitting back and waiting to get their turf time for free instead of putting in the work to get the funding.
11. MYS has bent over backwards to include the other sports in their community but Lacrosse and Football are unwilling to participate
12. What is the difference between putting Bermuda grass on a field or putting synthetic turf on a field? On the Bermuda grass, you get all of the field space and on the Turf field, you get limited turf space. Example of the Adopt a field contradiction to the turf field policy.
13. The McLean Community has stepped forward to help support the County's goals and Needs assessment to increase field play. All the county does in return is put up barriers. MYS should be commended by the county for their efforts and get a gold star and get nationally recognized. Instead they get the opposite from the County.
14. You can't legislate cooperation, you need to trust cooperation.
15. You are spending County time that adds no value to the community.
16. The proposal is archaic
17. The Chairman of the FCAC has a conflict of interest on the Turf Field MOU subcommittee in that he is the football chairman and does not support soccer.
18. The FCAC should be focused on how we can get more turf fields period. Not how to prevent us from getting more turf fields
19. If Football, lacrosse, rugby and field hockey can't afford to pay for a turf field, then the county should put up their portion of the money.
20. Since soccer is 83% of the users, they should get 83% of the turf field space

## **Notes from Public Comment Meeting July 9, 2008**

### *Regarding cricket allocations and fields:*

We have only 2 cricket field in the county to accommodate 2 regional leagues with 20-25 teams each. We need more fields to accommodate the need. Fairfax County residents shouldn't have to go to Maryland to find a place to play cricket.

### *Regarding the MOU – “holdback”:*

In Dranesville District, unless you play soccer, you can't play on turf. While it's not technically exclusive use, in practical terms, it is, especially during peak times. There should not be exclusive use. Other clubs have worked it out so that all sports get turf space.

It's difficult for small clubs to get access to turf fields. Our kids get assigned poor fields, which lead to injuries.

We're all taxpayers. We should have access to the turf fields.

Soccer dominates this county. There is no equity among sports.

Arlington has unscheduled time on turf fields. I know about the serious walk-on issues, but 5 year-olds don't have opportunities to just go out and use a field. MYS kicks them off.

There should be “casual time” – opportunities for the community in general to go out and use the field.

There needs to be parity across sports and across sports groups (within a sport).

There needs to be opportunity for small clubs to get on fields. We need some access to turf fields. Right now, we have to go to a private school in Alexandria to get time on turf. I am very concerned about the MOUs and exclusive rights. I'm ok with the right of first use; the problem I have is with exclusive use. All taxpayers should have access to field use. We're all providing opportunities to kids and we should all have an opportunity to use the fields.

Large clubs have stopped maintaining their grass fields because they're dedicating all their money to turf.

Should scheduling considerations be based on championships and team quality in addition to monetary contributions? That could help reward hard work and determination.

If I had a house and was renting it out, I'd want to make the rules, not my tenants. But we ask the Athletic Council to write these policies. The MOU is awfully generous to the contributing groups because the FCAC wrote it.

### *Regarding the MOU – transparency:*

MOUs should be reviewed by the FCAC before they are signed. Current MOUs were signed before anyone else knew about them.

*Regarding the MOU guidelines:*

The MOU doesn't include maintenance. Who should maintain the fields? If the maintenance is covered by the county (taxpayers), shouldn't that be considered regarding use?

The MOU should include an annual audit of the contributing organizations to make sure the group is using the field in compliance. Since clubs determine how they use their space, they may not be using the fields as they say they are.

How can the MOUs be structured so small groups can participate in turf field development?

Groups use these fields to make money through tournaments, membership fees, etc. We're giving away the farm on this.

*Regarding the status of existing MOUs:*

Existing MOUs have been changed before. Why not now?

*Regarding Adopt-a-Field Policies:*

In light of the turf discussions, we should revisit the adopt-a-field policies as well.

*Regarding residency requirement:*

Other counties are very close to Fairfax. 90% per club is a little too high. Elite programs have different needs; we can't get the same crop of players completely from within Fairfax County. 80-85% per club is a good number.

But non-county residents don't pay Fairfax County taxes. We have such a field shortage, so why do we bring kids in from other counties?

By making the policy per-club instead of per-team, groups will just bring in more little kids to get their numbers to 90%.

Making the percentage per-team instead of per-club will help the premier programs compete against larger clubs that can pad their numbers with the rec players.

The residency requirements restrict the growth of programs by limiting them. This cripples our ability to serve the best Fairfax County kids, as well. The total number of players at the elite level is not that significant, especially if you start charging them.

You cannot build elite programs on the backs of the county's taxpayers.

Elite programs exist throughout the country. We need to be able to provide that service in Fairfax County. If kids can't compete at that level here, they'll go elsewhere. We'll have to revert back to providing only rec soccer and there won't be local opportunities for kids who want to play competitively.

But space isn't available for younger kids because we're giving it all to elite programs.

We should expect clubs to enforce the per-team policy themselves.

Clubs will not self-enforce because it is not in their self-interest.

*Regarding non-county youth fee:*

\$20 isn't high enough.

Revenues should be directed to the scholarship program.

Perhaps revenues could be allocated to infrastructure for better scheduling with soccer leagues.

*Regarding field allocations:*

Soccer league scheduling should be done through the leagues, not through the clubs.

Use of fields by more teams than the policy allocates can exceed the limits of the field.

Groups should give back space (even on portions of fields) if they aren't using it all.

Why don't groups allow other users on fields if they are not using the entire field?

Small fields need to be accounted for in the policy.