

Clermont Park Master Plan Revision

PUBLIC COMMENT MEETING

July 25, 2019, 7:00 P.M. at Franconia Government Center

Meeting Summary:

A Public Comment Meeting was held July 25, 2019 to present the Draft Master Plan Revision for Clermont Park. Public comments on the draft master plan were provided by some of the approximately 30 attendees signed in at the meeting.

Other Officials and Staff in Attendance:

Judy Pedersen, Public Information Officer

Cynthia Carter-Jacobs, Lee Representative, Park Authority Board

Caleb Lester, Staff, Director of Communications, Office of Supervisor Jeff McKay

Mark Sickles, Delegate 43rd District

Dave Bowden, Director, Park Planning and Development Division

Paul Shirey, Manager, Park Development Branch

Ryan Stewart, Interim Manager, Planning Branch

Pat Rosend, Project Manager, Development Branch

Presentation:

The meeting began with introductions by Judy Pedersen, Public Information Officer, Fairfax County Park Authority. Opening remarks were provided by Cynthia Carter Jacobs, Lee District Park Board Member. Pat Rosend, project manager for the Park Master Plan, provided a brief history of the site, site conditions, and surrounding context, master plan process, timeline, and described the draft plan.

Public Questions and Comments:

Following the presentation, Ms. Pedersen moderated an open public comment period. The following is a summary of questions and comments:

Why are you proposing the change to the park?

Baseball seasons are typically played in the late season. From early March to the end of the school or they usually end by Father's Day. Then they start back in September and go through November. As everybody knows that is the time of the year when it gets darker sooner. So the kids can't play during the week until school out, so the real reason this is being asked, is the leagues actually came forward and said would you consider lighting, if we had a public discussion on considering lighting, so we can get our kids out here and keep them active a little longer, for the timeframe, when they play their season. Which again is the normal season goes March through June and then September through November.

The zoning ordinance allows for lights until 11'o'clock. Isn't that a little late?

The zoning ordinance allows athletic fields to be operated until eleven o'clock. The Park Authority would only operate these fields based on the use. And because this is a youth use, most likely the latest we would only ask for is 9:30.

Can adult (or any) teams play until 11?

The FCPA has a satellite-based internet system and the lights are programmed to come on when the fields are scheduled. So, if the fields are being scheduled for the day or scheduled use for only until 8 o'clock on one day then the control schedule will be set up. So, that is how the fields are scheduled and those lights will not be able to operate once the schedule says, turn the lights off, what is does is turn off all the power to the lights. Even if someone was there on the field and tried to operate the lights, they couldn't. The BOS can modify the deed language to allow lights until a specific time such as 9:30. That time would then take precedence over any Zoning Ordinance regulation

Once the children are done for the day, can adult teams use the fields?

The fields at Clermont are not suitable for adult play

Specifically, who asked for the lights?

Pioneer Baseball league asked the Park Authority to bring the question to the community and gather input for the Board of Supervisors to review and consider revising the deed restriction on lights.

Speakers

01

I am here as a pioneer parent. I have two children that are currently baseball players and my youngest, will be playing in the fall in t-ball. I am vested in what happens to this park because I live on the street that has the park. So, that said it looks like a great deal of thought and effort in all the analyst done with the fields, lighting and all of your presentations. So, my first question, were any other parks considered for nighttime play? So why in September and October single family homeowners were not invited to the meeting, but the Lockridge Homeowner's Association was, which a townhouse community with a homeowner's association was. So, what do you think about Lee District Park getting lights instead of Clermont?

02

So only concerns as the neighbor directly next to the park. Where is the light pollution for our property? One, is it going to impact the housing value of the house we just purchased, again this is our forever home, our dream home is has you guys looked at that?

So, my property line is this here. This is my house here. This my garage here and we have another structure back here. So, if anyone is impacted by this structure here is going to be us. This was a big selling feature the reason we bought this home in the first place, was because of the fact that there was this privacy, this natural park that was there. I love the fact there is a ball field there, when we actually have kids, they can play there. I am just concerned as someone that just purchased, a very expensive purchase, the biggest one of our lives. To have this home and now to have that lit up in the evenings. Thank you very much, I really appreciate it.

03 Northern Virginia Girls Soft Ball Association and VGSA

We are the primary user of the two soft ball fields, the two skin fields right here. So, the information sessions must have escaped us, so we didn't have a chance to participate in those. My big question is,

how come our organization was never consulted about possibly lighting the softball fields. There are next to none softball fields for girls, that are Park Authority fields, that are lighted. Particularly in this part of the county. And VGSA sounds like it's a big regional organization, but it is not. We serve primary, the kids living in Hayfield, Edison, Woodson, Annandale pyramid. When we get access to lighted fields they are high school fields, so very limited use in the spring and then even into the fall, lots of times the schools block out use for big events whether it football games or back to school night or they don't want people in the parking lot. Baseball teams you are familiar with that kind of thing. We have that on all of our fields. We do have some use at Wakefield Park, nothing down serving people this area, which makes a full half of our organization. Couple things, we do speaking to the lights and the spill over, we use Lake Braddock High School secondary school, and they have brand new lighting. The spillover is so minimal we can't even use the batting cages, which are literally, if this is the edge of the field the batting cages are where you are sitting. It is way too dark right there to use batting cages. It is amazing how dark it is off the field. The new lighting is amazing. And again, agreeing with what the gentleman said, we don't go late. Right now, with late sundown, kids are out there practicing and playing till 8:30. What this gives us an extra half hour. This allows us to have games and practices during the week, as you get later in the fall or starting in spring. It's not late, it's not big tournaments. It's for those same neighborhood games and practices that you see out there now. Obviously, this is coming from my prospective, but hey. It is really minimal. This new technology is really amazing and again please consider the girls.

04

My property also backs up against this park here. And when the games are playing, I can hear the announcers and the crack of the bat, I can hear the applause. On a Saturday afternoon it quite pleasant and I enjoy hearing those sounds, but I do not want to be hearing those at 9:30, 10 o'clock at night. And also, the lighting and you mention in your presentation, it is mention greatly reduced. Greatly reduced doesn't mean it will be eliminated. And so, there is going to be spill over regardless. Whether or not if its shinning in our windows, it still going to be, when you are trying to get to sleep you are going to see a brightly lit. You will still be able to see the light. I am concerned that property values will go down, who wants to live next to, six months out of the year you are going to be hearing those games play at night and those lights are going to be on. Again, I want to go back to the reduced lighting. The graphics are really nice, but can we get like a design. The actual design, the parts list, like what lights are being spec'd, the actual height of these polls. So, we can evaluate those so we can have more information to make comments of the actual design. So, say its greatly reduced doesn't say anything. Its non-specific, it doesn't say like, it's not specific enough and I don't buy it.

I also have a concern about the traffic, the traffic on Franconia with those lights on and the additional traffic of people coming in and out of that parking lot, because that whole going east bound on Franconia between those fields. That parking lot there on Camren Lane is very dangerous. Those cars making left hand turns into that parking lot. There has been a number of accidents there. So, by extending the game play you are also increasing the risk of traffic accidents on that road. So, any comments before I leave about being able to get the specs, the actual specs, what was specs, what lights are spec'd, what the manufactures are.

05

I live right there. Right across the street. I have been a pioneer for six going on seven years. I am actually on the board and I'm commissioner. Two years ago, I took the minors commissioner job. Which

feeds one of the fields we are talking about. #3. I can tell you from the growth we have seen with Pioneer Baseball, we do not have enough fields to accommodate the kids that want to play. Especially in any events where, due to weather, we may not get games in. We actually had to cancel games in the season because we didn't have flexibility, due to weather conditions to delay multiple games or games at nighttime. Also, the permit that we hold on this field, only to Pioneer youth sports. That's why this whole process started we were adamant that the lights go off at 9:30 and in the briefing we had with the Park authority that has been our position that it needs to be written into the deed that it go off at 9:30. Because this is youth sports and there is no need for the players to be there out there beyond 9:30. And the other side of that from a community prospective I don't want people in the neighborhood hanging out, in the parking lots until after a game ends at 11 and adults hanging out till 12. The area is growing, there are not enough fields and the lower level entry level positions there is more space cause, they don't need it. They don't hit the ball that far. You can work on Lee District Field at the same time play while they are doing football on the other side. You cannot do that with older age kids. Also, with that flexibility it will allow up to potentially get more games in a season. In regard to traffic our discussion we think it gives us more flexibility. Everyone right now is setting their practice time on those two fields for 5:30. Between 5 and 6 o'clock so everyone is cramming to get into Clermont. Which is a horrible situation. This gives more flexibility for practice times, which could be stagger between those age groups and lessen the traffic to prevent backups.

06

I am on Cannon Lane. The noise spill over, I am on the opposite side of Cannon Lane over here, it is not the worst in the world. But you should be aware of that. The noise goes over to the other side and you can hear the play. I don't have kids, I am not against kids, I am a pediatrician and I love kids. I like kids' baseball, so this is not about that. This is about traffic. I believe about once a year, someone has a brick pier right at the edge of Cannon Lane that when people pull over take the left of cannon lane some idiot goes to the right and every year this guy gets plowed into so whether or not so to speak, traffic there. Lights, I am in the middle on lights. I agree that reducing lights doesn't tell me that it is eliminated and doesn't have an effect on animals in area. It is not just the light intensity but the light. So, that can have an effect as well. I don't have writing on the code. But if I was a bird, flying right now I don't know if I would approve it. I also been in the area for several years, I work on notification. I come from a family of truths. A well-advertised medium has different meanings to different people.

07

I am 510 feet from the park. We saw your house. It was awesome. So, we have cracked the bat on Saturday it's great. So, you can put a lot a light restriction, the one thing you can't restrict is when that crack of the bat goes off and they cheer each other this creates loud and you can hear it. So, we are 500 feet away is within a thousand feet of that area the reason I want to show that in this area is. Those homes range in price for over million dollars. So, one sold for a million on this street. One sold in this area for somewhere in this area at 400 hundred thousand, somewhere 500 hundred thousand, lot of 6's and 7's. Average price is 600 hundred thousand for home. You have 100 homes at 600 hundred thousand that's easy math, its 60 million dollars of real estate. That is fact one. Fact two, I checked the square footage for the lighting just quickly. The amount of lighting that goes into the parking lot is greater than a football field. A football field is 150x300, so that is 49 thousand square feet. So, the square footage of the lighted area beyond the fields is about 125 thousand square feet with the greatest and latest technology. Combined together, just for a point of reference that is 85 percent the size of a Safeway shopper's center. That is the amount of impact that is going across the street. So, with that, I

would love to see an economic impact if you put something the size of a Safeway shopping center with lights across from 60 million homes, adjacent to a park. Second is that I did look at the utility of the fields and looked at the best table we have is the scale, what I do want to point out is of the three fields, three of them are the same size. The bigger field. I know you have kids on field one in the league, but the larger field is the one that is used is close to capacity or I see overflowing. I would be much more interested in supporting something where you build another field to a larger field. I see more fields during the daytime and less than an obstruction at night.

08

I live on Cannon Lane as well and I boarder the park and we were not notified of the two original meetings. So how much is this costing and who is paying?

09

I live Clermont area. Not on this street, but actually on Clermont near the school. My youngest and my middle child are involved with Pioneer. A very good organization, very consensus, very trying to do the right thing for the all right reasons. And I have been involved probably four to five years. Sometimes as a coach and sometimes as a fan, with my children playing. I am generally in favor of this because, just recently being an assistant coach there is sometimes at 6:30 the lights are already gone. You know the sunlight's gone, the clouds come in, a storm is brewing and sometimes you just need an extra half hour, but you really don't have that cause there is no artificial lighting.

So, I know that from a safety standpoint. We have to stop the kids from playing. You can't throw the ball; you can't hit the batting cages. I feel like there is not a requirement that the lights go on till 9:30 all the time. We can adjust seasonally as needed and when we don't. I feel light lighting a couple of the fields really helps the community at large. I really believe that. It's not just Pioneer and those children. I think as we get more sports teams understanding what the value is. I think long term benefits out weight the negatives.

10

I live in Ridgeview Estate that is right across the street. I can tell you that I have been at so many of these meetings where a lot of these same concerns about lighting. I think it was last year that the Park Authority completed a survey asked people to weigh in on what they wanted and passive and active recreation came in top. I think having a balance, which Fairfax County does a good job. But having active recreation in all parts of the county and some lighted fields, in some reason is not going to hurt value in the long term. People are moving here because they want the amenities this county offers. I am concerned about the lighting, but the lighting technology is increasing dramatically over the last couple years. I would hope since we have some close residents, that we could look at some creative solutions to visual ways to buffer the two sides for the closest homeowners. I can tell you on a Saturday that traffic on Franconia Road heading out to Ridgeview is really hard. That is my biggest concern and I am not sure what we can do, but I am willing to work with you all on that. As well as possible visually esthetic sound barrier on the other side. I don't see this as the biggest negative thing. It's not pleasant but I think the county will benefit from it.

11

I also live on Cannon Lane and back up to the park. I guess I am concerned with the changes, So, if I was to say you can have your lights, but you can't have metal bats, you have to use wooden bats I don't think that would work real well. And so, we are kind of changing the rules on me and that's what concerns me. So again, what the others said I didn't get any public notice, because I don't have a home owners association for our community. My concern is the Pioneer folks talking about cutting off the light at 9:30. We have a deed now that has restrictions on it. That's changing, what you are asking to do is change it, it hasn't changed yet. But it concerns me that you can write anything into a deed, I am not attorney, but it should bind the county a little bit. But apparently if you put the 9:30 on there now, 5 years from now might come back and say might not come back and take it to 11 o'clock because the league has grown, we have decided to take on other things. And lastly seems like three quarters of this is conservation area. I am concerned about that.

12 Pioneer Baseball

To everyone who a resident that has opposition or express concerns. I have respect for you. I can sense hesitation or perhaps a fear. You have some questions. Anyone in a green shirt will be happy to sit and answer any questions. We can talk to you about trash. There is probably centuries of experience at that park involving youth baseball and the logistics of how it goes. There is a need in this area for more capacity for baseball.

I have been in the spot of having to tell people that you are on a waitlist, because there is not enough coaches and there is not enough fields to go around. We can ask, you can answer. You can ask all the question you want, and we will answer them. It is a multi-layered process to get fields from all of these different sources. Baseball is a curse, because it is played outside, it rains, the fields get muddy. There is nothing we can do to help the fields dry faster than Mother Nature will allow us. This is a very reasonable request. We thought about it, there unfortunately what we are doing in terms of coming to you. I understand the reservations, we can talk about traffic. It will alleviate traffic because not everyone is not rushing into the park and out of the park stop at the same time. This allows coaches to stagger practices, allows us to maximize the use of the fields. Which is everyone rushing to the bus stop, picking up their kids and getting to practice from 5:45 to 6:30 and running home. There is a need in this local area for youth baseball. There are kids that want to play competitive youth baseball, and this is a small step in this direction.

Following these questions, the public was reminded about the 30 day comment period via Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov