

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 2, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 60 : ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELD AT BEN BRENNAN PARK

This memorandum is in response to Councilman Krupicka's inquiry into the possibility of using prior year balances in the athletic field improvement project of the CIP for installing artificial turf and/or lights to the soccer field at Ben Brenman Park.

No decisions have been made at this point as to the location of the next artificial turf field to be installed. Before a location is decided upon, City staff will do a thorough evaluation of all potential locations, hold public meetings with the local community to determine whether or not there is sufficient justification and support for a field at that location, and then seek City Council approval of a recommended location. The FY 2010 Proposed CIP does not anticipate sufficient funding to complete a full artificial turf installation project until FY 2012. The Proposed CIP describes a number of potential candidates for an FY 2012 field as being Mt. Vernon, Braddock Fields, Potomac Yard (assuming redevelopment project resumes), and Boothe. Ben Brenman could also be added to this list as a viable candidate for an artificial turf field. It should be noted that when uses for this site were discussed a few years ago, there was some interest in establishing a senior center on this site. The costs of the fields at these sites vary with Mt. Vernon being on the low end and Ben Brenman on the high end.

The current prior year unallocated balance for athletic field improvements is \$492,500. The current allocated balance for athletic fields is \$300,000. This allocated balance was originally intended to provide funding for the City match for artificial turf fields to be installed at Potomac Yard. With the anticipated delay in those fields (due to the developer not proceeding at this time with development), this funding could potentially be reallocated for other athletic field projects as necessary. Between these two balances, the total available funding for an athletic field project is \$792,500.

The City Manager also recommended in the FY 2010 Proposed CIP those capital projects that an additional 1¢ on the real estate tax could be used for. This list included \$900,000 for the artificial turf field program. With this additional funding, the City could have as much as \$1,692,500 programmed for the athletic field program in FY 2010.

Based on analysis of the current construction market and actual construction costs for the Fort Ward artificial turf field during Summer 2008, the following cost estimates for a lighted turf field at Ben Brenman Park have been developed.

Artificial Turf Field Project	Estimated Cost
Engineering Consultant	\$100,000
Construction Sitework	\$82,500
Artificial Turf Installation	\$860,000
Stormwater System	\$75,000
Electrical Utilities (incl. Field Lights)	\$225,000
Construction Contingency (15%)	\$186,375
TOTAL PROJECT	\$1,528,875

As is the case with all construction estimates, these costs are based on several assumptions about the site and public process. Of these assumptions, a few are of special note. The current soccer field at Ben Brenman does not have electrical service capable of handling field lights. The \$225,000 estimate for installing electrical service and field lights is dependant upon access and distance to a power supply as well as coordination with Virginia Dominion Power. The \$100,000 for engineering consulting assumes the typical City and public process of a plot plan for the replacement field and an SUP for the addition of athletic field lighting. An SUP process would be required at Ben Brenman for the addition of field lights (with or without an artificial turf field), but not for the installation of an artificial turf field.

It would be possible to install both the artificial turf field and the field lights, or to simply do one or the other. In order to best alleviate the City's shortage of available field space it would be best to do both. To construct an artificial turf field without lights fails to optimize the investment because the field is only available during daylight hours, which greatly limits playing time. Conversely, installing lights on a natural turf field (in a City without sufficient field availability) can be a risk because the field would tend to be overscheduled, which would quickly reduce the quality of the playing surface. This option, otherwise, would require a significant effort by the City to monitor and restrict field usage as necessary to maintain turf quality.

Currently the Ben Brenman soccer field is programmed for 9 months out of the year, for approximately 44 hours per week. The sole user at this point is the Alexandria Soccer Association (ASA). ASA has over 1,800 youth in their recreation and travel program which has access to the field. The field is closed for the winter season (mid-November - February) each year to rest, as is the case with all the City's natural turf fields.

If the field was converted to an artificial turf field with lights, the City would be able to increase programmed time on the field, and avoid delays or loss of playing time due to the weather. Adult Sports Programs and other youth sports programs like Rugby and Lacrosse would also be able to use the field throughout the year. The installation of artificial turf and lights would allow the City to use the field 12 months a year and increase the user time to 98 hours per week (which would more than double the current natural grass surface time). With an artificial turf field at Ben Brenman, the City would lower the number of rescheduled games (due to weather) that would normally have to be made up on natural grass fields. This will help preserve the City's stock of natural turf fields over the long term. It is also important to note that Ben Brenman soccer field already has ample parking capacity to handle the increase in programming.