

**TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
Public Parks & Recreation Committee
Budget/Management Committee
Town Hall Council Chambers
February 21, 2012-Tuesday**

Public Parks and Recreation Committee

Present: Michael Molisse, Chairman
Edmund Harrington, Vice Chairman
Robert Conlon, Councilor
Kenneth DiFazio, Councilor
Thomas J. Lacey, Councilor

Budget/Management Committee

Present: Kenneth DiFazio, Chairman
Patrick O'Connor, Vice Chairman
Arthur Mathews, Council President
Michael Molisse, Councilor
Michael Smart, Councilor

Also Present: William McKinney, Chief Financial Officer
Richard Swanson, Town Auditor
James Clarke, Director, Planning & Development
Michael Gallagher Director of Administrative Services
Jeff Bina, Director, DPW

Also Present: Jane Hackett, Councilor

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chairman Molisse called the Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Chairman DiFazio called the Budget/Management Committee Meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

12 007-Special Purpose Stabilization fund-Turf Field Feasibility Study

James Clarke, Director of Planning & Development, presented this measure with Steve Reilly, Parks & Recreation Commission, requesting funding for a feasibility study of turf fields. Mr. Clarke reported that several weeks ago, Mr. Reilly met with him and the Mayor. He presented information compiled by soccer, football, lacrosse and other sports groups concerned with the condition and use of the town fields and approaches to beginning to solve some of the problems with them. Mr. Clarke reported he and the Mayor were impressed with the materials presented and the work it represented and felt

an analysis is appropriate at this time in order to determine a course of action, including the request for a turf field feasibility study.

Councilor Lacey asked for clarification of Mr. Reilly's role as he is a member of the Weymouth Recreation Commission, on the board of the Youth Soccer League, and a proposed nonprofit Weymouth Sports Council; is he advocating on behalf of the sports groups or as a representative of the Weymouth Recreation Commission? Mr. Reilly responded that his role is as a representative of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee. The information and data in the presentation was compiled in that group and discussion has taken place in those meetings. Councilor Lacey noted the measure is originating from the administration, and he seeks clarity on what role Mr. Reilly plays. Mr. Clarke responded that Mr. Reilly asked to meet with him and the Mayor on behalf of several sports organizations in the community, looking at the issue of community rectangle fields and an analysis of them; identifying ways to address what appears to be overuse of them. That is how it was presented to the administration. The administration looked at the information and determined it was appropriate to carry the analysis further. It is as described; a feasibility study; it is not a proposal for specific activities at this point to evaluate whether turf fields make sense in certain locations within the community. Mr. Clarke confirmed it would be a study overseen by the administration and not handed over to any specific group or groups. Mr. Reilly is present to assist the administration in presenting the information.

Mr. Reilly made his presentation in power point format. It is the sum of information from a meeting with groups: Weymouth Youth Soccer, Weymouth Girls Soccer, Weymouth Youth Football, North Weymouth Flag Football, Weymouth High School Athletics, etc. that revolved around discussions of the field conditions, availability, general concerns and the number of kids participating in sports in the town. It included the condition of the fields, the proposed state, whether turf fields are cost effective, potential for revenue from turf fields, and possible steps to resolve the issues. Keeping the focus on the importance of sports to the town's youth, Weymouth currently has over 5,000 youth participating in sports activities which take place on the town's rectangular fields: those that can be used for multiple purposes. The baseball fields were not part of the discussion since they don't take the same wear and tear and most appear to be in good condition. Mr. Reilly noted Weymouth's fields are unsafe and unsightly from overuse. He compiled a spreadsheet of how much use takes place within the organizations, in terms of games, special events and practices. The total events were 11,792. On 16 fields per year, the average is 737 per field. A national horticulture survey of 300 field managers of average use on a quality field, indicates 80 events per year constitutes overuse. Mr. Reilly reviewed the individual fields and average and type of use for each. The fields average six times the recommended usage. Even with aggressive maintenance, there aren't enough grass fields in town to accommodate the number of children enrolled in sports programs.

During the presentation, Councilor Conlon arrived (6:45PM).

Mr. Reilly then reviewed the town's options. There isn't space to add additional fields, nor staff to maintain them. Another option is to limit participation. The third is to do nothing.

If the town considers installation of synthetic fields, one would likely not meet its needs. Consider installing six fields; one at Legion, two at Talbot and three at Central. Siting at Legion would meet the reuse goal at Legion; locating two at Talbot, proximity to the high school and putting three in a central location such as Central would be cost effective.

The expected benefits of the town would be increased practice and playing time, not having to rely on weather, and the ability to host tournament play. It can be a reliable source of revenue; the upfront investment would offset the long-term cost with less required maintenance. The high school has used the turf field to produce some income; there is a bigger opportunity to provide revenue with rental possibility or tournament hosting. In speaking with other groups, an approach to designing the user fees and the manner in which permitting groups can also offset the costs. There are groups that are willing to help out with fundraising as part of the expense.

Mr. Reilly noted the installation is a good fit for Weymouth. Maintenance costs can be decreased if six of the sixteen fields are replaced with synthetic surface. They would be safe from future budgetary cuts and the town would be the recipient of any revenues from the fields.

Mr. Reilly then reviewed frequently asked questions: the fields are warrantied for eight years, but with proper maintenance may last longer. They are a cost-effective investment; they require less maintenance. Safety data from CPSC, EPA, OSHA and state agencies indicates these types of fields are considered safe; there are over 6,000 currently installed in the country. They provide water cost savings and minimally impact the environment. The town of Wayland, which relies on well water and installed the fields has installed synthetic fields and studied the effect on its supply. After the installation, the degree of contamination was significantly less.

The next steps in the process were outlined; if funding is approved, an engineering contractor will be hired to determine the approach that the town should take; whether the locations are suitable, the costs and what can be done to improve conditions if synthetic is not considered the best option.

Mr. Clarke provided a handout to the committee updating the scope of work. A preliminary analysis will look at all of the fields and confirm whether the proposed locations are appropriate. Site plans will then be prepared for those locations, looking at typical conditions (slopes, soil, siting access) as well as an analysis of potential constraints and a review of the types of turf products that can be used. The consultant will then prepare a cost analysis for preparation of the site, the materials to survey work and then construct the fields, review the required permitting, including Conservation Commission oversight, and develop a timeline and prepare site renderings for presentation moving forward. They would also prepare memorandum and other

presentation material, conduct public meetings and public hearings. Administration felt it was appropriate to move forward with further analysis before proposing any project, and could request funding from the Host Community Agreement funds and then construction would occur over spring and summer.

Chairman DiFazio thanked the administration for bringing the proposal forward, and the presenters for the information. He reminded the committees that the last time the town attempted renovation of town fields was 2005--Legion Field, and it resulted in an impasse. The legwork was done to show there's a need for more fields or turf fields to sustain activities. He noted he was pleased with this proposal; when last considered at Legion, the administration could not credibly support the need for more fields.

Councilor Mathews asked about the three locations for the six fields; he hopes the study will explore additional sites as well. He understands the logic, but would like to see that alternatives are considered.

Councilor Lacey noted the measure doesn't reference specific fields. He asked Mr. Clarke whether the intent is to allow the committees and the Council to make the ultimate decisions as to which fields would be included for synthetic installation. Mr. Clarke responded that that is the intent. The information from the sports groups resulted in the choices in the request for a study. It's possible that the mix could change. Councilor Lacey asked if the study will include all fields. Mr. Clarke responded that it wouldn't to the detail in the fields recommended for the study. The preliminary review will eliminate or add fields for further review.

Councilor Lacey asked if there will be a geographically balanced approach in town to targeting fields. Mr. Clarke responded that will be included in the study. It will also be where the fields make the most sense. Councilor Lacey asked if any of this work includes an assessment for installation of lights. Mr. Clarke responded that it is not a consideration in the presentation for scope of work; it is feasibility for construction and location. Councilor Lacey fully agreed with the stat of the fields, and that the town clearly needs fields; the town has fantastic youth and feeder sports programs and he supports whatever can be looked at for the town to invest in its fields. The fields are the town's responsibility and we owe it to the community to invest in parks. He noted Mr. Reilly does a lot of work and invests much time, but that he plays multiple roles. It is critical that roles are kept clear to avoid any perception of conflict of interest. Although the intention is admirable, the roles and responsibilities must ensure full transparency to the public in the process.

Councilor Smart asked if the \$35,000 is simply to evaluate whether turf fields should be installed, or whether grass fields should also be installed. Mr. Clarke responded that it is simply a feasibility study to evaluate whether the town should consider installing synthetic fields at particular locations. Once that has been determined, further analysis will be done. It was not intended to look at whether grass fields should be renovated. It will be part of the study process going forward. Councilor Smart noted that he expects the study will validate turf field issues; cost, maintenance, disinfection, off-gassing, etc. and

other comprehensive detail he would want to see in the study. Turf fields are not maintenance free, and the study needs to be comprehensive and judged against cost and maintenance of grass fields. He asked that the study include this information. Mr. Reilly responded that the study would take into consideration the proposed usage by the community. While it may be cheaper to put in a grass field, it may not be cheaper over the long run in terms of maintenance costs. The turf can alleviate the stress on existing grass fields. The study will attempt to show what Weymouth needs.

Councilor Hackett asked what assurance will be that the fields will be available across the board to all organizations in town, and whether the permitting process will be changed. Mr. Reilly responded that it falls within town departmental purview and the permitting process. Permitting may need to be a more in-depth process. Councilor Hackett responded that she hopes that establishment of parity will be taken into consideration in the study. Mr. Clarke responded that it is not a part of the study, but could be addressed if it goes forward. She also asked if the Athletic Director, Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds and DPW were included in the initial process; and if they also speak to the need for additional fields for high school athletic use. Mr. Reilly responded that Mr. Mackin provided initial data and agrees that the high school athletics program can use more fields to support his program.

A MOTION was made by Vice Chairman O'Connor to continue the Budget/Management Committee discussion to a future time and was seconded by Councilor Smart. Vice Chairman O'Connor apologized for his late arrival and noted that a public hearing is in order; he wants to hear what the public has to say. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Lacey to continue the Public Parks and Recreation discussion to a future meeting and was seconded by Councilor Harrington. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

At 7:25 PM, there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Vice Chairman O'Connor to adjourn the Budget/Management Committee meeting and was seconded by Councilor Smart. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

At 7:25 PM, there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Councilor Lacey to adjourn the Public Parks and Recreation Committee meeting and was seconded by Councilor Harrington. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Kenneth DiFazio, Chair of Budget/Management

Approved by Michael Molisse, Chair of Parks and Recreation