

WESTERN SPRINGS PARK BOARD SPECIAL REFERENDUM MEETING
March 15, 2011 (APPROVED)

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Jim Havlat
Janet Gassmann
Wendy Bastyr
Bob Daman
Jennifer Cromheecke
Damian Marshall (arrived @7:08)

OTHERS PRESENT

Robert Ekroth, Park District Attorney
Tracy Alden, Recreation Director
Maribeth Newell, Park Board Secretary
Craig Himmelmann, Director of Parks
Brad Walse, Western Springs Resident
Darren McRoy, Western Springs Patch

Commissioner Elect Dominic Arquilla
Commissioner Elect Jennifer Dunleavy
Commissioner Elect Walter Knake
Commissioner Elect Mike Stibich

President Jim Havlat called the March 15, 2011 Special Referendum Park Board Meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Several residents of the Village of Western Springs were present as well as representatives from Western Springs football, little league and soccer. The meeting was held as an informational presentation on the proposed artificial turf field in Spring Rock Park. Secretary Newell established that notice of this meeting was published in the March 9, 2011 public notice section of the Suburban Life.

President Havlat asked that questions be held until the Board finished its overview and presentation. He explained that the plan for an artificial turf field has been investigated by several of the Park Boards. Users need fields and Western Springs is basically landlocked. A diagram of the fields and the proposed turf field in the southwest corner of Spring Rock Park was reviewed on an overhead projector screen. President Havlat explained that the demand on the fields constantly causes conditions to deteriorate and weather causes many games to be cancelled until the grass fields can dry out. The turnaround on these fields barely allows repairs to set in. As a Board, we don't the artificial turf field for a single user group. It is our intention to schedule the field equitably for soccer, rugby, lacrosse, football, little league, and leave times for free play. We will have fencing around the field, but there will not be a gate.

Overall, the cost is \$1.5 million which is in the realm of normal. We are aware of the wet condition of the field and have engineered to compensate for that. With the Township of Lyons' funding, we have already received a little over \$511,000.00. However, they are very specific in that the funds can only be used toward the artificial turf field project. We have applied for two

State grants. Given the current State of the Illinois budget, odds are slim that we will be awarded either of those. We have already been turned down for an OSLAD grant. This Board has been fiscally responsible and we have explored many options before deciding to go to Referendum for this project. President Havlat also pointed out that the Western Springs Park District is a separate governmental taxing entity. Any increases residents have seen on recent tax bills have not been earmarked for the Park District. It has been over 60 years since the last tax increase for the Park District and this would be a temporary increase for 10 years and would drop off the tax bill. 1.59% of your taxes go to the Park District. This referendum would increase that amount to 1.75%.

Treasurer Bastyr introduced herself and addressed the impact on the property tax bill. She informed everyone that our Bond Counsel is Spear Financial. The bonds will be retired after ten years. Basically, the cost per \$100,000.00 of property value would be \$5.64. The line item on the tax bill is your 2009 property value. A property valued at \$400,000.00 would pay \$20.84 more per year. After 10 years, the increase would disappear. We would have a reserve built-up from rental fees paid by our user groups during that 10 year period. This reserve would be used to repair or replace the field if needed. Ten years is a very conservative estimate for replacement of the field. The hours played on the field indicate that the field would last well beyond the 10 years.

Commissioner Daman introduced himself. He explained that we researched vendors including Field Turf, Astro Turf and SportX. Field Turf is a quality product and they have installed in excess of 100 fields in the Chicago area including 4 fields at Hinsdale South High School. A sample of the turf was made available to the audience. He further explained that Field Turf also has a prepaid insurance policy that covers the cost of installation for the length of the warranty. Replacement cost of the field would be approximately \$400,000 to \$415,000.00. We would set up a definite payment system with our user groups who already annually contribute to the Park District for maintenance of the grass fields. They are all willing to be placed on a payment system for use of the turf field. We also have user groups from outside of Western Springs who would pay to use the field.

Field Turf also includes training of our staff and cleaning equipment in the installation costs. The lining of the field would accommodate Lacrosse, soccer and football. It can also be used for baseball practice. It is a multi-functional field. At this point, Commissioner Daman introduced Jonathan Huard a representative of Field Turf. He was invited to answer any technical questions and has overseen the installation of 110 artificial turf fields in the surrounding suburbs.

Resident Brad Walse expressed his concerns about a tax increase and the location of the field. He stated that it is in the 100 and 500 year flood plain and that area used to be an ice rink. Additionally Flag Creek has CSO's for storm water overflow. If there is a flood event, would it be flooded with sewage? Could it be moved to a different area or elevated? How the turf would be cleaned if it is flooded with sewage.

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Director Himmelmann explained that the ice rink was not naturally occurring. The Park District built an earthen ridge with a drainage system in the center. The ice rink was flooded and drained by the Park District.

Jonathan ??? said that Field Turf has built fields on flood plains. They compensate by dropping the field. One of the fields is at Wheaton College. It was dropped 4 feet and is designed to take on several feet of water and be gone and dry by the next day. The field stays in place. They have not had any damage due to water in the 8 years it has been in place despite being flooded several times. We can just clean and groom the field the next day.

Resident, Brad Walse asked about environmental issues if tires are used as a base. He cited studies from Connecticut and New York which discussed lead, heat exhaustion, zinc, chromium and manganese as environmental concerns. He was not sure of the level of chemicals generated by an artificial turf field, but asked where the run off would go if it is built in a wet location. Jonathan ??? explained that the fibers used are polyethylene plastic and they are lead free. Lead was a concern in old astro turf, but is no longer a concern. The base is silica sand and recycled car and truck tires. Chrome rubber is in asphalt. The fields generate what is comparable to a car driving by. He asked Mr. Walse to forward the studies to him so that he could better address his concerns. Mr. Walse stated that it is Field Turf's literature. Jonathan ??? said that a lot of rubber studies are not about artificial turf, they are about other products. The EPA has said that studies related specifically to artificial turf fields have shown no cause for concern. As with any issue, a conflicting study can always be found. Commissioner Marshall agreed that "more research is required" is always the last line of any study.

Commissioner Elect Stibich asked what happens to the \$511,000.00 grant if the Referendum does not pass? President Havlat explained that the grant would not be awarded. Lyons Township has grant money as a result of the Save the Timbers action. They have \$10 million in funds to grant.

Resident, Paul Newman asked if the field would be available for a friendly game of football. Commissioner Daman explained that we would not set parameters until the election results are in. However, that would be likely since the grass fields are currently used now. If there isn't a scheduled activity on the turf field, residents would be welcome to use it.

Resident Beth Wallace asked what would happen if the cost exceeds the \$1 million referendum. Also, how will the replacement cost be covered? Treasurer Bastyr answered that the \$1.5 million is a conservative estimate. The final cost would most likely be less. In that case, only the actual cost in excess of the \$511,000.00 grant from the Township would be levied in the Referendum. If the cost is less, we would levy less in the Referendum. Commissioner Daman explained that our user groups would offset the replacement costs and we would build a reserve over the next 10 years. Jonathan ??? stated that he has replaced a few fields and the cost was approximately \$400,000.00 and those were upgrades from the original fields that were installed. Turf costs have actually decreased and are approximately \$5.00 per square foot. Gas prices do

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not affect the cost. President Havlat explained that football spends \$10,000.00 per year on striping the grass fields. Soccer teams are currently paying rental fees and we receive fees from the Recreation Department. Resident, Mike Bruck, noted that football spent \$110,000.00 installing lights in the park and baseball spent \$75,000.00 on various field improvements. Commissioner Daman has researched rental fees for local turf fields. Forest Park charges \$60.00/hr. for residents and \$120.00/hr. for non-residents. Lyons Township charges \$48.00/hr. and \$120.00/hr. for non-residents. We would implement similar fees to build up a reserve for field replacement over the 10 years.

Resident, Bob Shannon asked what type of liability insurance would be required and would the premium cost increase for the turf field? Commissioner Himmelmann answered that the Western Springs Park District is a member of PDRMA which is an insurance pool of 150 Park Districts, Forest Preserves, and SRA's (Special Recreation Associations). We purchase group insurance and are covered regardless of what is installed in the parks. Our user groups all provide Certificates of Insurance with the Park District named as additionally insured. There would be no additional costs to the Park District for the turf field.

Cub Scout Nick Krull, Troop 12, asked if there are any future plans for additional turf fields in other parks. President Havlat answered that this would be the only turf field and it would accommodate many user groups.

Darren McRoy, Western Springs Patch asked if there are any plans for bleachers. President Havlat answered that we presently have bleachers that travel from park to park. Commissioner Daman noted that there is a concrete pad to accommodate bleachers in the future. Whether or not it is installed depends upon the final cost.

Resident, John White acknowledged that taxes are a major concern in the current economic climate. However, he thought the presentation tonight addressed those concerns and the actual tax increase is minimal. Resident, Marybeth White asked when the Park District last received a tax increase. Treasurer Bastyr answered that it has been over 60 years since the Park District has asked for a tax increase. Resident, Mike Bruck also felt that the presentation was very informative and that the tax increase was minimal per household. Treasurer Bastyr explained that we levy taxes based on funds. This Referendum would be its own line item on the property tax bill. Once it is paid in 10 years, it would no longer be a line item that the County collects. It would be dropped from the tax bill in the 11th year.

Resident, Paul Karas expressed concern about the wording of the Referendum that it might be difficult to get it passed. President Havlat explained that, as a Board, we are only presenting the facts of the Referendum. The verbiage of the Referendum is written by Cook County, we cannot change it. Commissioner Daman said that the user groups are supportive of the Referendum, including; football, AYSO, lacrosse, Western Springs boys and girls lacrosse, Western Springs JC football, cheerleading, Fenwick and LT lacrosse, Lake Shore lacrosse and summer camps.

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Tom Kelly of Western Springs Football stated that their league averages about \$10,000.00 per year for sod replacement on the grass fields. They are ready and willing to pay user fees for the artificial turf field.

Darren Greving, Lacrosse league representative confirmed that they spend a substantial amount each season to rent fields outside of Western Springs. He also asked how quickly repairs can be made to the artificial turf field when they are needed. Jonathan ??? answered that they have 4 fulltime crews and usually have someone out within an hour.

Resident, Marybeth White asked where the product is manufactured. Jonathan answered that the product is manufactured in Dalton, Georgia.

MOTION

Having no further questions from the floor, Vice President Gassmann motioned, with a second by Commissioner Daman to adjourn the March 15, 2011 Western Springs Park Board Special Referendum meeting, which motion was carried by all on voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Marybeth Newell
Western Springs Park Board
Secretary

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