



Arlington & Falls Church, Virginia

Arlington Soccer Association

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April 27, 2011

George C. Towner
5275 Lee Highway, Suite 102
Arlington, VA 22207-1619

Re: Sports Commission—Synthetic Field Conversion

Dear George:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Arlington Soccer Association (ASA) in response to the Arlington Sports Commission's request for recommendations on conversion of rectangular fields to synthetic turf.

ASA has recently examined demographic data compiled by Arlington Public Schools that projects a large increase in the number of school-age children in Arlington County by 2016. Based on historical trends for the ratio of children in school who play in ASA's various soccer programs, we anticipate an increase of as many as 1500 more children playing organized soccer in Arlington by 2016. Finding field space for those children to practice and play games will be a challenge.

One way that the County can provide the facilities necessary to accommodate this increase in youth soccer players is to convert grass fields to synthetic turf. The Arlington Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (PRCR) has determined that synthetic fields can handle up to five times the amount of play of a grass field, proving that such fields are, in the long run, cost-efficient.

ASA has carefully reviewed all the existing rectangular fields in the County, using criteria established by PRCR (lighting, parking, impact on neighbors, etc.) for evaluating the suitability of converting a grass field to a synthetic surface. In making our recommendations, we are assuming that the first three synthetic turf fields at Long Bridge Park, already under construction, will be completed, and that the fourth field at that facility will be constructed as part of Phase II. Based on our review of other fields, ASA recommends that the following fields be converted, in the following order of priority:



1. **Powhatan/Bluemont.** These are both youth-sized fields. Currently, the only youth-sized field in Arlington that is synthetic is at Barcroft Park. Unfortunately, that field is designated as a “community field,” which has limited its use for games and practices by ASA. Despite being an ideal size for 8 v 8 youth games, Barcroft is used primarily by adults, many from outside Arlington County. Both Powhatan and Bluemont could be converted and lighted with little in the way of neighborhood disruption. Bluemont is isolated from any homes and has parking available nearby; Powhatan is adjacent to an already lighted skateboard park and also has parking available. The need for synthetic youth sized fields has been highlighted this Spring season, in which most games at both fields were postponed during the first two weeks of the season due to rain that occurred one, or even two, days earlier.
2. **Kenmore #4.** This is the open space at Kenmore Middle School between the parking lot along Carlin Springs Rd. and the tennis courts. Although it was designated as a rectangular playing field when Kenmore was re-built, Arlington Public Schools failed to require the contractor to install a proper playing field. As a result, this space has been vastly underutilized as it is in unplayable condition as a field of weeds. This space could accommodate a full-sized field that could be lighted with little disruption of the neighborhood, with plenty of parking available. Converting this space to a synthetic field would provide a significant increase in playing space at a central location in the County.
3. **Gunston #3.** This is the grass field between the tennis courts and the existing synthetic turf field at Gunston. It is already lighted, so there should not be any community issue with lighting it. Ample parking exists at Gunston for a second field. This field may currently be designated as a “community field.” ASA objects to certain fields being designated in a manner that they cannot be scheduled for games and practices. All members of ASA are members of the “community” and ASA endeavors to schedule games and practices on fields that are convenient to teams by their neighborhoods. ALL Arlington fields are open to the “community” when not otherwise scheduled, and Arlington currently requires players registered in a league to pay a “player fee,” whereas it does not require a player fee of adults who commonly utilize community fields, often on a regular basis for highly organized games.
4. **HB Woodlawn.** The rectangular field behind HB Woodlawn School is a nice space, but underutilized because the field has deteriorated. The field is served by parking both above and below it. There are only a couple of houses adjacent to the field, and they are separated by a thick set of woods, such that lighting the field with modern “dark sky” lighting could be accomplished without significant neighborhood disruption. Converting this field would also put HB Woodlawn on par with the other high schools in the district, which have synthetic playing fields.
5. **TJ Upper.** This field, on the upper level next to the Thomas Jefferson Community Center, is already lighted. Converting it to a synthetic field would allow for greater usage and avoid cancellation of games and practices due to rain.
6. **Kenmore II.** This is the full-sized Bermuda field already used for games. It is already lighted, with parking. Conversion to turf would avoid rainouts and taking out of service for grass to recover.

7. **Chesterfield.** This is the space above Wakefield High School, along Chesterfield Street. It is large enough for a full-sized field. There are a small number of homes across the street, but the field and lighting could be oriented away from them. Some parking already exists, and additional parking will be available as part of the construction of the new Wakefield High School.

8. **New Wakefield.** When the old school is demolished—around 2013--there will be space for a new rectangular field there. It would be a perfect opportunity to add much-needed new field space.

9. **W-L Side Field.** This is the space between the new Washington-Lee aquatic facility and Quincy St. As with Kenmore #4, this space was supposed to have been made into a playable rectangular field as part of the construction of new Washington-Lee High School, but APS failed to require the contractor to make it a playable field. This space is currently not usable for games, but is large enough to support a full-sized field. Parking is available. There are some homes across Quincy St., but modern lighting could be provided in a way to minimize any impact. This space would likely get significant use from W-L teams.

10. **VA Highlands II.** This is the area adjacent and perpendicular to the existing synthetic field. At one time, ASA played games on this field, but it has deteriorated to the point of unplayability. There is sufficient space for a full-sized field. Since it is adjacent to an already lighted field, lighting should not be a significant issue. Parking is also available, but we understand there may be concerns about the adequacy for an additional field. Converting this space to a synthetic field would add to the County's overall inventory of rectangular fields, and thus increase available field space.

11. **Hoffman-Boston.** There is a large space available here along and above I-395 that could accommodate a full-sized field. It could be lighted with minimal neighborhood impact. However, parking here is limited and somewhat distant from the field, and we understand that there are parking restrictions on Sundays for a nearby church (otherwise, this site would rate higher on our list.)

ASA would also like to start a dialogue with the Sports Commission, Park and Recreation Commission and DPRCR about the potential for adding indoor soccer space. Currently, demand for indoor space in Arlington in the winter months far exceeds the supply of space, which is limited to the aging Gunston Bubble and space at the Barcroft Fitness Center that was never intended for soccer play. ASA believes there are viable options for economically adding to the County's indoor space, including erection of a seasonal "bubble" over an existing field, such as Virginia Highlands.

We look forward to having further dialogue with the Sports Commission and Arlington County about these important issues. If we can provide any further assistance, please let us know.

Yours very truly,



Ken Bass

President, Arlington Soccer Association