

Meeting Notes

Ballard Playground- Athletic Field Improvements – Meeting #1

June 11, 2018

7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Ballard Community Center, 6020 28th Avenue NW, Seattle WA

Attendees: 6 participants

Project Overview

Libby Hudson, project planner, provided an overview of project, which will include:

- Installing two baseball synthetic turf infields, replacing the sand infields
- Replacing field lighting with a new high efficiency LED field lighting system
- Improving access to the community center east entrance, the exterior restrooms, and the ballfield dugouts - to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Improve field drainage and irrigation
- Other field enhancements as budget allows

The project budget is \$1.6 million, plus an additional \$550K recently added for redoing the entire field drainage and irrigation. Katie Bang, project manager, was able to show the efficiencies of doing the planned work of improving the drainage and irrigation now, instead of in six years when it was planned, so the work was moved up and incorporated into our athletic field improvement project.

Katie added that the construction budget is now \$1.388 million.

Schedule: The project schedule includes: Design through Summer 2019; Construction through late Fall 2019

Project Team: Katie Bang, Seattle Parks Project Manager

Consultants: Lisa Corry and Renee Finney from Cascade Design Collaborative

Other consultants not in attendance at the meeting include:

- Sitewise Design, Civil Engineer: Steve Hatzenbeler
- DMD & Associates, Lighting Engineer: Don McLean and Dan Wong

Presentation & Discussion

Lisa Corry and Renee Finney described their firm and background, and presented the site inventory, site analysis, design program and schematic design (please see the presentation).

The following questions and comments were discussed.

Lighting

Spill from the field lighting will be greatly reduced from the existing lighting system. We hope to meet the strict standards of International Dark Skies (IDA) with the new lighting system. According to the on-site light measurements done by the lighting engineer, the spill from the existing field lighting is three times higher than the measurement of light just from the street lighting with the field lights off.

- Will the existing poles stay?
Response: No. There will be new metal poles, along with brackets fixtures and luminaires. Lighting upgrade LED system poles, etc. These will have minimal glare and off-site spill and meet International Dark Skies standards.
- Currently the NE corner and the SE corner of Field #1 have lighting issues due to the trees; could the poles be located to the west, or key branches removed to improve lighting in those areas? That's been a problem for our Little League kids.
Response: The lighting engineer did do on-site measurements, primarily to measure off-site spill. The new lighting system will be designed to address those existing issues and should improve these shadow areas. Field #1 will be designed to protect the Heritage Trees while providing the best lighting possible for play.
- Did the lighting consultants take readings with the field lights on? There are giant shadows that cover home plate on Field #1.
Response: This path is on the school property, but we will see if we can accommodate this lighting request on the light poles located along this service roadway since it used a lot by pedestrians. It will be budget dependent and we may need agreement from the school district.
- The existing pathway (between school and field) is not well lit and very dark in the winter; it is a problem walking with young kids. It would be nice to have path lighting along that path that divides the playfield from the school.
Response: This path is on the school property, but we will see if we can accommodate this lighting request on the light poles located along this service roadway since it used a lot by pedestrians. It will be budget dependent and we may need agreement from the school district.

Other Lighting Comments received prior to meeting

- Health concerns regarding the LED lighting for the field – these lights make it difficult to sleep and cause other health issues; the existing field lights are fine – would like to understand why changing lighting is necessary.
Response: The existing Ballard Playfield lighting system dates from the early 1970's and has reached the end of its usable life and must be replaced. We are replacing it with our standard field lighting system that is both energy efficient and low maintenance, and which also reduces off-site light impacts on local neighbors. Due to the new technologies provided with a LED system, the Park and Recreation Department has adopted LED field lighting as our standard because this system reduces impacts and is fiscally prudent by reducing on-going electrical and maintenance costs to the city. According to our lighting consultant, DMD and Associates, health concerns regarding lighting stem from research of very high light levels, primarily studying the impact on shift workers for long durations. There is no existing research that definitively shows that LED sports lighting disrupts human circadian rhythms any significant amount more than the existing metal halide technology. In addition, light levels in the home are much higher due to sources within the home, than those originating outside when viewed inside the home. Research has shown that exposure to light higher in blue content has resulted in disruption of circadian rhythms. This relates to dosage and duration. In the case of the Ballard Playfield lighting, the duration the lights are on would be for a short time, so the duration would be very low. There would be minimal on-field impacts with the proposed lighting system over what exists, and vastly reduced lighting impacts off-site.

- Concern about the existing lights being on too late when nobody is using the field; concerned about the cost of using the field, and now including the additional cost for using a lighted synthetic field – Could that be too much for the Little League?

Response: The field lighting is set to turn off after a scheduled use of the field; if the lights are on and the field is not being used, it may be due to a no-show of the scheduled user. We notified the field schedulers of this issue and they will monitor to assure that the lights are turned off when not in use. The field use fee will increase as a result of the synthetic turf, but this will be a modified fee since only the infield will be in synthetic turf.

Drainage

- Where will the site drainage be routed? 28th Street is already problematic with storm water drainage system overflowing at times.

Response: The field currently drains to a sanitary sewer line in NW 60th Street. The project will route the field drainage to a storm line in 28th Ave NW. There is a lot of water there as it originally was a creek in this area. We will review downstream flow capacities with the City’s GIS and stormwater information to ensure viability of the connection.

- There is a steady stream of water seeping out of the retaining wall at the southeast corner of the field; Are there concerns about the integrity of the wall there?

Response: The wall appears to be in good shape, but we have hired SPU to do borings to determine if there are any concerns about the existing wall.

Accessibility

The plaza area will be upgraded to provide accessible pathways to the ballfield dugouts. The accessibility upgrades include surface and slope standards, and a route to the far field (Field #1) will be budget-dependent. We hope to provide a crushed rock pathway along the southern edge of the field (gravel to protect the roots of the trees that line this edge), but the budget may not allow for it.

- Will there be pathways to field #1 (eastern field) for folks with wheel chairs to get to the bleachers?

Response: We hope to do that. We designed the path to stay clear of the Heritage trees. The proposal is to run a crushed rock pathway along the southern edge of the field to Field #1. Currently this pathway is provided as an alternate, dependent on budget. Whether we can incorporate this pathway will depend on how we come out in the bidding process, budget-wise.

- Comment – Make sure it’s going outside the fence – it’s dicey now at that corner with the retaining wall and narrow space.

Response: If provided, the path goes outside the fence. We are moving fence inward toward the field to accommodate the new pathway to Field #1.

Site Amenities

The drinking fountain will be relocated. Planting areas will be provided in the plaza to allow for paving an accessible pathway to Field #2, while also meeting turning radius for maintenance vehicles that need access to the plaza area and exterior restrooms of the community center.

- Will drain next to the drinking fountain remain?

Response: the fountain will be moved and will require a drain, but it won’t be as severe a grade change as is there now.

Synthetic Turf

- How will the edging work between the synthetic turf and natural turf?
Response: We will use a rubber gasket that will be even with the infill. For the adjacent natural turf, we use soil, compacted to 85-90. The piece of rubber is evenly flush with the turf.
- Comment- I've seen a couple of fields like that - My daughter has played on similar fields.
- What material will be used for the turf?
Response: It will be synthetic turf with cork infill. We do not use the crumb rubber infill.
- What are the stats on synthetic turf; how does it wear? How long will it last?
Response: The turf is designed for player safety and easier maintenance; In terms of data on use for football fields (where most of the data is), synthetic turf wears well, especially compared to natural turf grass, and lasts from 10-12 years.
- Are you replacing the center grass area too – in the outfields; Is that a requirement as well?
Response: Not with synthetic turf, only in the infields. This project is intended to only provide synthetic turf for the infields. The drainage improvements may help extend the play for the outfield however. The project originally included only the drainage for the new synthetic areas, but this was an issue given the age and design of the under-drainage system. The existing drainage system is from the early 1970's and only adding new drainage to portions, meant that the older system would be left in place. We sought additional funding to include the entire field drainage (which was scheduled to occur six years later anyway). It didn't seem efficient to tear up the field again six years later.

Field Amenities

- From a Little League standpoint (might be outside budget), the overhanging backstops are a problem – with foul balls, and the edge of the field is tight – but could upright backstops be included to replace the clam shell backstops?
Response: That is beyond our budget, but we will note that those types are preferred for future improvements – the J style backstops rather than the hoop.
- Is there an area where we can set up batting cages? Our Little League is growing (5-10%), we are up to 493 kids and expect over 500 next year (girls and boys). We have 40 teams now and often play four teams at a time on this field. Little League has installed temporary batting cages at other fields, maintained them and removed them after the season – covering all costs. Is there any place here that we might be able to accommodate that? The cages are 15'x50'. We have an area at Gilman that is 20'x100'. This site is a lot tighter here. We don't think there would be an impact with these; there is no digging, just a 6'x8' hitting and pitching mat. Could one of these cages be temporarily placed under the Heritage trees? We would pay 100%, install, maintain and take down at the end of the season.
Response: We would not include this in our project at this point. We would need to consider impacts to the Heritage Trees; would the mats create blocking for drainage, etc. We could consider whether these would be appropriate for this field; Since this is a small site, we are not sure there is room at this site.
- Comment – Another location for batting cages could be by the western edge of the field (adjacent to where the hornbeam trees are located). We could do a mock up and email to Parks for consideration.

- What about the bigger picture at the community park – not just the field? What about replacing the retaining wall, replacing fencing, or adding site amenities such as picnic benches at the northeast corner of park? Could we look at other uses of the field?

Response: We understand that there are other needs here, however the project is a field improvement project with a limited scope focused on field improvements and ADA access.

Schedule

- When will construction begin? We are hoping after we have finished with BCC, last week of June

Response: That is the plan, to start construction in July 2019.

Next Steps

Katie informed the group that our consultants will need to do infiltration testing and this will likely require that the field be closed to scheduling for 3 days- June 26 -28. We apologize for this, but it is necessary for permitting. We have informed the programming staff.

If you have further questions, comments or concerns, please email Libby Hudson at Libby.hudson@seattle.gov. Check the project website to follow the project – <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/current-projects/ballard-playground-athletic-field-improvements>

We will hold another community meeting at the Ballard Community Center on August 23.