



Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Fields & Diamonds Balance Subcommittee Meeting #2

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Southwest Service Area Master Plan (SW Parks Plan)

August 14th, 2019, 6:00-8:00 pm
Lynnhurst Community Center

CAC Members Present: Brian Nalezny, Jenel Farrell, Anj Petsch, and Paul Ragozzino

Public Present: Approximately one dozen members from the public were in attendance

Staff, consultants, and speakers present:

MPRB Staff included: Colleen O'Dell, Madeline Hudek, Alyssa Gilmore, Emma Pachuta
SRF Staff Include: Joni Giese

INTRODUCTIONS

Meeting begins at 6:00 pm. Unlike other meetings, the first hour of this meeting is dedicated to an 'Open House' style review of all of the concepts created at the last subcommittee meeting by the public and CAC. Attendees review 8 concept designs for the four parks: Kenny, Armatage, Linden Hills, and Pershing Field Park. These designs were posted around the room on 30 x 42" boards, and attendees were given three stickers to vote for their top three favorite design groupings. Attendees could also leave notes on each board, listed below, if they had further comments.

BOARD NOTES

Concept 1

Votes: **9**

Notes:

- Batting Cages at Kenny?
- Flip fields at Armatage, to play four games at once (support for this comment)
- Why two T-ball? Make fields able to be used for more ages (base distances)

Concept 2

Votes: **8**

Notes:

- Pershing: baseball field needs a fence (support for this comment)
- Pershing: change the configuration of diamond to SW as SE corner because of foul balls (support for this comment)
- Batting cages needed! [not clear what park this comment is specifically in reference to, either Kenny or Pershing]
- Goals on the fields at Armatage need to be outside of the baseball field (strong support for this comment)
- Fields at Armatage need to be opposite one another
- Too many soccer v. baseball fields
- At Pershing, if turf, line the field for more options

Concept 3

Votes: **3**

Notes:

- All comments made on this design are in reference to Armatage Park
- Why can't there be a multi-use field cluster of this size somewhere? There are already multiple diamond sport complexes in Minneapolis (ie. Bossen, NE, Bryn Mawr) [For reference, the cluster the commenter is referring to is a pinwheel configuration of 4 diamonds]
- Make sure the bases at the four diamonds are pegged for up to 13u ages

Concept 4

Votes: **1**

Notes:

- Does T-ball always refer to 60' base and 46' rubber/pitch mound? Need standardization across the system.
- Attach information to pegs at what distance it is and what ages the distances are for
- Echoed in a similar comment: put pegs at 60' (mini); 65' (11u) and 75' (13u) there is no need for 14u (90')
- 12u baseball needs minimum 200' outfield fence (not as large anymore); high school needs 350'; if there can only be 300' then do a taller fence at 200'

Concept 5

Votes: **4**

Notes:

- More stand-alone multi-use fields, open up summer use of the fields
- In reference to Kenny; can only play two [baseball] games at a time, four diamonds isn't feasible

Concept 6

Votes: **3**

Notes:

- Consider a miracle field in the Northwest corner of Pershing
- Question: does Minneapolis have a miracle field?
- At Pershing, do permanent fencing just along the baseline, then temporary for the rest of the outfield
- Pinwheel configurations [at Armatage] are a waste of space that could be used for fields
- Youth baseball needs raised mounds too, but portable mounds are huge (150lbs) and need storage, is there a solution?
- Maintenance of batting cages is important

Concept 7

Votes: **6**

Notes:

- At Kenny, the larger baseball field would need fencing!
- Are there batting cages proposed for Kenny?
- This comment is to the design grouping overall, not one specific park within the design: 16 soccer fields really? Move some fields North? Do we need 6 full sized fields in 4 parks?!

Concept 8

Votes: **2**

Notes:

- Support no ice at Kenny

GROUNDING

No grounding exercise was done at this meeting.

WELCOME AND REVIEW

Staff welcomed everyone, introduced staff, CAC members introduced themselves. An informal poll of the room was taken to gauge if it was anyone's first meeting, then staff gave an overview of the timeline, information about the CAC, and more information about how to continue to stay involved in the iterative process. Meeting agenda changed slightly to first allow for public comment facilitated by CAC Chair and SRF Landscape Architect.

FIELDS-DIAMONDS BALANCE DISCUSSION

Public Comment

(Public) Representative of Southwest Baseball interests. Have tried for the last decade to get a premier baseball diamond for the high school as they are the only high school in Minneapolis without a premier field. Southwest High School's Athletic Department is on board for a premier diamond within Southwest, on board with getting a premier baseball diamond at Pershing Field Park.

(CAC) What concepts did you prefer?

(Public) Voted for Concepts 1 and 2

(Public) President of Southwest Baseball Boosters. Also was in favor of Concept 1. Process note, would rather take pieces of all the concepts than decide on one grouping. Recognition that baseball is losing 1/3 of the diamonds; willing to even sacrifice more (34-35%) in order to get the kind of high-quality diamond that is needed by Southwest High School. For example, in Concept 2, there are three diamonds shown to be overlapping at Linden Hills, there is no need for three, and would sacrifice one for a better design and distribution overall in the neighborhoods.

(Public) Need both higher quality baseball diamonds and soccer fields to encourage use. To encourage more use also need to address how the soccer goals and other field equipment are stored. When they are locked up no organizations outside of the MPRB can access them, and kids play is limited.

(CAC) What concepts did you prefer?

(Public) Liked concept 5 because there are more dedicated soccer fields in this concept, no one is moving goals in-between weeks, which would help with scheduling. Concept 2 was also interesting with the small sized fields for younger kids (less overlap this way). In general, favored concepts with the least amount of interference, looking to maximize the space.

(Public) A Baseball Coach. Preferred Concepts 1 and 7. Main comment is that we get caught up on T-ball versus mid-sized diamonds. Want to make sure that diamonds have multiple base pads in order to be used by the widest variety of groups, similar to what is already done at other parks (Bossen Field). Also brought up providing moveable bases and pitching mounds. Also wants to set the record straight about the outfield fence markers on the designs, people misconstrue them, they are NOT PERMANENT.

(Public) [Specifically in reference to Concept 2, but in general a design comment] Some of the diamonds overlap. The overlap of baseball diamonds doesn't make sense because some will always be unusable which doesn't work.

(Staff) Are you saying that the concepts don't work?

(Public) It feels like there are areas that are superfluous

(Staff) Reminder that one component of the exercise was making sure to meet all the needs for programming as they stand now, seeing if all the elements could fit in. It is the way a lot of the fields and diamonds are currently oriented because of the conditions (soil compaction, flooding, makes the areas more dynamic for use even in these situations)

(Public) Representing Soccer, Minneapolis United. In thinking about how the Park Board prioritizes sports by season, the fields are made to overlap, and the soccer goals are locked up in the summer. This is something that I would like to see change in the future as we want to be able to encourage kids to play these sports year-round. There are very few places that are independent of overlapping diamonds, and I would like to see more stand-alone

fields. There are diamond sport complexes in the city already (Bossen Field, Bryn Mawr, NE Complex) but there are no spaces in the city that has the equivalent for soccer, usually just thrown into an outfield, would like to see more care for field sports in general.

(CAC) Did you vote on a design grouping? Or were you unsatisfied with all of the concepts?

(Public) There are no designs that I think are perfect as they are now. The concepts that I chose were the ones with the most stand-alone fields [Concepts 5, 3, and 7]. There is a number of spots where you can see these [baseball diamond] pinwheel designs in large spaces, but there are no large spaces dedicated to fields, fields are always stuck into smaller areas.

(CAC) Are these complexes existing facilities or facilities that are in current master plans?

(Public) Talking about current facilities. There is no equivalent for fields in the system. Pearl Park will have a full-sized field and three smaller fields; but otherwise people have to leave Minneapolis to go to Nieman to play soccer.

(Public) Walked by Bryn Mawr today; has two High School sized fields and 13 baseball diamonds. They are planning to remove 7 of the diamonds. Question about what the fields will be used for. [This person preferred concepts 1, 2, and 7]. Hoping that everyone gets their needs met without having to go backwards. Hope to see younger and High School sized amenities at Linden Hills with games at Armatage, looking to maintain 2 High School level diamonds in the Southwest Area. Don't want any less than that.

(Staff) Bryn Mawr field space will be used for new activities like Rugby, Cricket, etc. The reason that these diamonds are being removed is to separate the diamonds more so that they can be used simultaneously

(Public) Bossen Field and Bryn Mawr Meadows are both outside of Southwest, specifically asking for fields for the High School to be able to play within their own district. The High School soccer team can currently play in their district, by playing on the field inside the football stadium.

CAC Discussion

CAC calls for Concepts 5 and 7 to be brought up to the front of the room. Concepts 1 and 8 are also brought up to the front of the room.

(Public) One other question; sports specific parks would probably work best for everyone, why wasn't this a concept that was illustrated? Based on the focus groups at Kenwood, there was agreement that dedicated sports in parks within close proximity to one another would be beneficial, but there were no concepts that came forward.

(Staff) This kind of set-up where spaces aren't multi-use makes it more difficult to meet MPRB programming needs, especially because it is difficult for young children to move around to parks (no car, no supervision, etc.). The concepts that are being looked at, at this meeting, came from the Fields and Diamonds Balance Subcommittee #1¹. Dedicated parks are something that can still be explored.

(Public) If this is a plan for the future, and hopes to be innovative, then it shouldn't be based on sports seasons, the facilities should be available regardless of what time of year it is.

summarize the comments on the four concepts that were brought to the front of the room.

(CAC) I do support the neighborhood fields at each park so that kids can easily go to a park and be able to play on their own, or have access to a park building. In the next round of designs maybe try to squeeze in soccer fields to maximize the number of fields to get kids of all ages playing. Prefer the four-diamond configuration that is not the pinwheel in order to prevent a cluster of fencing in the middle, and make it feel more open. Preferred Concepts 1 and 3.

¹ This Subcommittee took place on July 25th, 2019 from 6:00-8:00 pm at Lynnhurst.

(Staff) Passed out copies and summarized P. Smith's [CAC member who could not be in attendance] email, sent at the beginning of the month: P. Smith supports Pershing premier baseball diamond for Southwest High School, and also liked the four fields at Armatage in a pinwheel for youth tournament play. Supports SW High School baseball players walking to field at Pershing vs. traveling to a field.

(CAC) Request Staff to also summarize the most recent letter from the Fulton Neighborhood Association.

(Staff) Passed out copies and summarized: FNA had concerns about the distribution of fields and diamonds across these four parks. Pershing and Linden Hills combine their youth athletic programming, so impacting one park has an effect on programs in both neighborhoods—having a full-sized baseball field at Pershing or Linden Hills [replacing multiple diamonds in lieu of the premier diamond] would disrupt the programming and force kids who walk to these parks to go elsewhere. Recommend premier field at Armatage for High School use as High School aged youth have greater mobility.

(CAC) In response to the letter from the Fulton Neighborhood Association. On one hand agrees that the Southwest baseball team needs a dedicated field, however there will have to be compromise as to how the needs of baseball interact with the needs of the community. This CAC member preferred concepts 1, 7 and 8. Personally feels as though a dedicated baseball diamond wouldn't work at Pershing if there is a fence that has to be up for 4 months in a very small park and based off of previous CAC conversations. Understands that proximity to the school for a dedicated diamond is most convenient at Pershing, but Linden Hills is also very close. Desire to see concepts 5, 7, and 8 reworked with premier dedicated softball and dedicated high school baseball as both are needed; and need to balance the needs of multi-use fields also.

(Staff) For clarification, in summary the goals of the concepts should accommodate not only a premier baseball diamond but also premier softball?

(CAC) Yes. This is the feedback from the various associations. We need space for the high school teams but designs still aren't working because we need to be able to balance programming, the system as a whole, how small children will flow through these spaces, and how to balance multi-use field needs. There is not one design that I feel could be put forward as the lead right now.

(Staff) So, you're supporting the neighborhood association's value of keeping Linden Hills and Pershing together to accommodate the neighborhood's recreation requests for small children?

(CAC) Yes. This program is very strong, it has the largest number of teams that have to be factored and accounted for. This letter shows the complexity of this issue, highlighting that we need compromise, taking the best pieces from each concept to adequately meet needs.

(CAC) Question, are there schools in Minneapolis and the Metropolitan area where both baseball teams and softball teams use the same field?

(Public) No, they can't, the fields have different designs. The bases are different sizes, grass v. dirt, softball doesn't have a pitching mound, etc.

(CAC) Does it make sense to approach this by figuring out where the premier baseball field will fit best and move on from there?

(CAC) It doesn't work at Kenny because of the elementary and middle schools with kids

(CAC) Also distance from the High School

(CAC) Is the space where the amenities are proposed used for recess?

(Staff) No for elementary. Sometimes for middle school.

(CAC) High Schoolers may use the fields at Armatage but young children use the playgrounds.

(Public) Because of these conflicts with different times of use, having removable fencing instead of permanent is probably best. High Schoolers at Armatage put up the fencing for their games but not for practices. If there was a diamond in the upper left of Pershing, it could be used for a majority of the time, but on game days (only a couple days of the week) there would be a fence.

(CAC) This is different from what's been heard from the community, where the temporary fencing would either have to stay up or consistently have to take time to put it up and down.

(Public) Agrees that they wouldn't want the fencing up all the time.

(CAC) Could we look at Linden Hills for baseball and Kenny for dedicated softball? Could Linden Hills be the compromise, it is bigger than Pershing and would prevent the public park from being over dedicated to high school use. The Linden Hills temporary fence could be up the four months if the teams don't want to take them up and down. Older teams can play softball at Kenny because they'd be able to drive.

(Public) Why not look at Pershing for dedicated softball?

(CAC) Worry about the fence, not enough space to accommodate the youth programs

(CAC) Does softball require a fence?

(Public) For games, yes.

(CAC) Having fencing at both Linden Hills and Pershing is too much fence.

(CAC) If there was a premier baseball field at Linden Hills could there still be ice there?

(Staff) Yes, in fact, at one point it was proposed in the designs that the ice would be put on the tennis courts instead, but the Linden Hills neighborhood sent a letter in June that rejected this idea, and said that ice should be placed on the fields.

(CAC) The neighborhood funded those courts [at Linden Hills] correct?

(Staff) Yes, and they thanked us in that same letter for keeping the fields multi-use in reference to the initial concepts.

(CAC) What's the concern with placing ice on fields?

(Public) In the spring the field could be unusable even with the correct design because you have to wait for ice to melt and dry.

(Staff) Can regrade or bump out diamond at Linden Hills NE corner to provide more field space, could potentially fit a T-ball or smaller diamond in

(Public) Are the diamonds in these concepts the bare minimum that the Park Board needs, these don't consider the additional diamonds that would be needed than other organizations beyond the Park Board?

(Staff) The amenity needs that were provided were based on what is currently being rented out. There are constraints because lots of people want to be able to use the space, but the needs were based off of the Park Board needs, Minneapolis schools, and organization needs all together.

(CAC) So these reflect the minimum Park Board needs?

(Staff) Yes, but there is never really enough space for field or diamond sports to meet demand.

(Public) Spaces are always being used, for practices when there aren't games or Park Board events, understand that it needs to be a balance for everyone wanting the same space.

(CAC) There are several votes for Concept 7, where the premier diamond would be at Armatage, what are the concerns with concept 7?

(Public) We would have to replace four smaller baseball fields for the premier field. All four diamonds at this location are necessary to facilitate organizational programming needs outside of the MPRB.

(Project Staff) So what is the ideal diamond size for this location?

(Public) Small to medium sized diamonds. It's a bit of a misnomer, if you put in a diamond here it should be for almost any age, not fenced in so they won't be for leagues, more so for practice use.

(Project Staff) Medium-sized field 250' is the maximum needed for youth (300' foul line minimum for high school)

(Public) If Kenny is going to be artificial turf then a fence there would have to be taken down.

(Staff) Are there any designs that are currently at the front of the room that feel like they might be 70-80% there? Can we do some mixing and matching?

(CAC) I personally like concept 5, we'd have to remove some baseball at Kenny since there can't be four diamonds used at the same time anyways

(CAC) Where would the dedicated diamonds for baseball be in Concept 5?

(Staff) Armatage, anything else there would also be sized for premier softball.

(CAC) Did the Linden Hills neighborhood association letter say that they wanted to keep the ice rink there?

(Project Staff) Yes, they would like to retain the rink.

(CAC) Within concept 5, said there was no ability for additional ice, but it looks like ice is added to Pershing and both ball diamonds are taken out

(Staff) There is no ice in Linden Hills in this concept [Concept 5], but it could be in both parks. However, this doesn't make sense from a service standpoint because of how close Pershing and Linden Hills are to one another. It would make sense to think of Linden Hills and Pershing as a group, and Armatage and Kenny as a group

(Staff) In concept 5 there are no dedicated diamonds because the diamonds overlap one another.

(CAC) It doesn't feel like there is the capacity to meet youth programming requirements this way

(Public) it does open up different recreation opportunities through

(Staff) The four concepts in front of us all share the similar feature of the northern portion of Armatage is in favor of a field with ice, with the exception of the removal of a diamond.

(CAC) to public who represent various soccer interests, what don't you like about concept 8?

(Public) There is no dedicated soccer, but Concept 5 and Concept 1 are both broken up so that the ice could be off the field

(CAC) What is meant by a permanent rink?

(Staff) It will be concrete instead of grass, during the summer it would be used for various activities like futsal or bike polo. In winter it would have ice.

(Public) Sometimes diamonds are designated as premier diamonds, why aren't there any 'premier' multi-use fields?

(Staff) The way the term premier is used now denotes the level of maintenance

(Public) Why not a premier level multi-use field? It seems like it's lacking

(Staff) Not currently proposed in SW. Within the park system Parade, Farview and Elliot are all premier turf fields

(Public) There could be a premier multi-use field at Armatage on the north side

(Staff) One of the things that we need to remember about the north side of Armatage is that there are still amenities planned for this area outside of fields and diamonds. We have planned an orchard with urban agriculture, picnic area, expanded skatepark, outdoor classroom/plaza.

(CAC) I would like to propose an idea, for Concept 7, there is concern about the premier baseball diamond being at Armatage because we need the four smaller diamonds; I think it would be best to explore again specific parks being focused on one activity with a sister park for another activity. At Armatage based off concept 7, we could have a dedicated premier baseball diamond and a mid-sized diamond and the space above could become two more diamonds. Kenny would become all multi-use fields (two large, or several small fields). This would leave Pershing for more youth-oriented programming, and there could still be ice at Linden Hills which wouldn't affect baseball (keep Pershing and Linden Hills as is in a revised concept 7)

(CAC) So, premier dedicated baseball would be at Armatage in the south part of the park where there is no ice, the additional diamonds would be put in the North (4 diamonds total), this would make Armatage a dedicated baseball park, and Kenny would be a dedicated multi-use field park.

(Staff) Bringing up northern Armatage amenities again, what would we propose for the elements that would have to be moved?

(CAC) Downsize the elements, but staff direction should be to fit proposed elements in. This configuration would give up the proximity of the baseball diamond for high schoolers, but there needs to be compromise.

(Public) Can we guarantee we could get buses?

(Staff) that is not something the Park Board is responsible for with any high school.

(CAC) What about dedicated softball in the Northern part of Armatage?

(CAC) Then we would lose the youth diamonds.

(Staff) We could have the softball at either Linden Hills or Pershing based off concept 7

(CAC) If Linden Hills gets the premier softball will it lose what is currently in the park designs?

(CAC) With dedicated softball at Linden Hills even with the fencing there would still be room for youth programming, so at least the softball team would have a diamond in close proximity.

(Staff) Would the fencing you're talking about still be temporary fencing?

(CAC) Yes, but if it was allowed and feasible it would be nice for the fencing to be able to stay up for the duration of the season.

(Staff) Directs the conversation back to the CAC chair, asking for direction and next steps

(CAC) Concerned that youth programming will be affected by the current concepts. Would like to see something that solves the youth programming issues, as well as helps the high school teams.

(CAC Chair) Would like Staff to come back with a recommendation about what to do, would like to be more solid on a concept. Does not want another concept that continues to be picked apart at the next full CAC meeting.

(Staff) So we should look at concept 7, but look at replacing the multi-use fields proposed at Armatage with diamonds; replace what is proposed at Kenny with all multi-use fields, while Linden Hills (with dedicated softball) and Pershing stay as proposed in concept 7. We will retain the elements that are proposed in these concepts outside of the fields and diamonds and bring the design back with all these considerations incorporated.

(CAC) Support.

(CAC) is it possible to have an artificial infield with a soccer field over it?

(Public) It's really difficult to play on two different types of surface (artificial turf v. grass), things would have to be moved around also, but you can stripe artificial turf for everything.

(CAC) Clarification, are we saying that you will show us the revised concept and we will talk about it again (eg. either Lynnhurst, where we're continuing to hear comments about the parking lot and tennis are swapped), or is it something we're going to stick with?

(CAC) I think we need to see the updated design. Also want to know if it will work with both the MPRB and other stakeholder groups (SWHS Athletics). Need to see if the design works with programs, need to be able to say that if these are focused parks that the rec. directors are okay with that.

(Staff) Suspect that we will get into conversations of proximity.

(CAC) Can we bring this to the CAC on Monday²?

(Staff) It more than likely won't come up due to the other agenda items which have priority. If you don't want to gather again as a subcommittee, we can send the updated design to this subcommittee and stakeholders you mentioned via email. If the designs are approved on those fronts, we could put it online and bring it up at a full CAC meeting.

² In reference to CAC Meeting #14 on 8/19/19 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at Kenwood Community Center.

CAC agree with this decision, with the expectation that the subcommittee will stand behind the design recommendation with the ability to articulate their rationale. CAC Chair makes a motion, it is seconded and passes.

THANKS AND NEXT STEPS

ADJORN (8:07 pm)