8.10.2023 Diamond Sports TAC#4 Meeting Notes

Siciid Ali (Park Planner) kicked off the meeting, which focused on goals (usage, access, reservation, maintenance, scheduling, etc.) and how MPRB and other organizations/clubs might collaborate to achieve those goals.

Introductions/Agenda Setting:

- Halfway though TAC process, 4 meetings to go.
- Should MPRB be overseeing the TACs goals, or should other stakeholders be involved?
  - Goals: Use, access, reservations, field readiness and maintenance
  - What’s the benefit to MPRB? Other stakeholders? Community?

Break out into small groups to discuss MPRBs role in diamond sports, as well as other stakeholders

Large group share-out/discussion:

Group 1:

- Use, access, reservations: MPRB shall
  - Make more data available to orgs (field conditions, maintenance)
  - Provide good field inventory
  - More 75-foot fields
  - More batting cages
  - Make existing fields more flexible
  - Maintenance issue dashboard
    ▪ Issues are raised, but unable to see if issue is addressed unless you physically go to field
  - Centralized scheduling
    ▪ Scarcity of fields
  - Lots of last-minute switches, changes, returns- make it easier to return fields to make fields available more quickly
    ▪ Helps reduce scarcity
- Use, access, reservations: Clubs and teams shall
  - Have orgs better staffed to organize scheduling
    - Need bodies and time
  - Have internal processes to raise issues to park board
  - Return unused fields more quickly

- Maintenance, MPRB shall
  - Get fields groomed and usable quicker
  - Safety
    - Better home plates, pitching rubbers, bench protection
  - Provide toolbox so people can help with maintenance
  - Red tape
    - Individuals want to donate to park board to build fence or fix an issue but park board can’t always accept money - minimize red tape
  - Allow clubs and teams to do maintenance on their own
  - Change shift times up so staff can do maintenance when orgs need it

Group 2:

- Allow other organizations to fix things, use things, set up equipment boxes
- None of the issues are new or different, what can community partners do to help move forward on actionable items?
- What if park board and school board worked together to schedule things, create a structure of accountability, set it up so clubs can help raking, taking care of fields - set up accountability system so park doesn’t have to take care of things/throw away things

- Volunteer maintenance program
  - Like an “adopt a park” program
  - From a park board perspective, we need management, we need someone to provide tools for these programs

- Do a field inventory so the park board knows what facilities they have

- What constitutes practice field? Game field? Set up standards/ base-line expectations for what these fields look like
  - What amenities are needed? What do these fields look like for club games, high school, middle school? What grooming is expected?
  - Not meeting these expectations makes players feel unvalued
  - Have a universal definition for what these fields look like
  - Maybe some practice fields need to become game fields - need for improvement on these fields
  - Know which fields we should be scheduling for practice, for games
  - Partnership: entities with a high volume of field rentals, in exchange for high usage, they provide some maintenance
    - Todd field: kids picking weeds 20 min before practice/game, but still paying for field use, however, can’t use the field if they don’t do it
  - Baseline should be determined by TAC, not just parks

Group 3:
- Database of the fields
  o Not just what fields, but field lengths, what amenities
  o What parks have what
- Visibility of the fields: increase ease of access to seeing what fields available and not
- Artificial scarcity because hard to return fields
- No defined or written document between parks, schools, residents, leagues etc. as to the structure of what teams get priority
- Broader sliding scale of fees
  o Cost isn’t covered- why would a youth team from out of town get the same rate as an in-town team?
- What’s the cost of the fields? Not just maintenance but personnel
- Having both baseball and softball field close to each HS
  o Accessible to kids by bike or walking
  o Schools don’t provide busing to practice- kids must find own rides
- Centralized scheduling, schedules for a month out
  o Allow parents and teams to plan their lives
- Allow orgs and teams to pick up fields- not set in stone
- Figure out appropriate times for high school baseball and softball times, is there a half hour in
- Access to full list of what diamonds have what amenities (base lengths, dugouts, fences, lights, and how are those diamonds and grass maintained).
- Visibility to what diamonds are available to use on short notice.
- Determine what is the pecking order for who has preference in reservations? Can someone kickoff a game that is running long?
- Provide equipment boxes.
- Perhaps a sliding scale for fees (more for non-Mpls groups).
- A scheduling system that users can see and functional to filter appropriate data.
- Need to locate (temporary and long-term) location of all seven High School softball and baseball fields.
- Have centralized scheduling and provide schedules for a month out like hockey, acknowledging that the schedule may need to change during a given month.
- Need to develop a schedule/chart on when games start for different softball/baseball teams and how long they get to use the field, is there a ½ hour – one hour gap for maintenance or extra innings before the next game starts? How many games can a “game” field handle any given night?
- Work with central MPRB staff for use of diamonds instead of individual park directors.

- Allow organizations to prep fields if they haven’t been prepped (rake, chalk lines).
- Have the same weed control for all High School baseball and softball fields as Neiman and Parade.
- Determine when fields will be used for games and which will be used for practices.
- Drag fields more often – establish a goal for each game and practice field.
- Charge a rate that actually covers all costs.
- Allow organizations to pay overtime fees if applicable.
- If we actually had a softball/baseball facility (pinwheel) with storage for maintenance equipment, associations can have parents maintain fields if MPRB is short staffed.
- between just incase it runs over, for maintenance, so nobody is kicked off the field, has a reservation but isn’t allowed to use it
- Allow orgs to pay for overtime for those who want to maintain fields
- Goal: HS baseball and softball has no weeds in the field
- Accountability: how often are practice fields being dragged? Game fields?
  - Set up expectations.