

**Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee  
Written Public Comment- 10/18/2021**

<b>Entry Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>
10/16/2021 6:35	<p>As a realtor, I am encouraged to advocate for property rights. Every tenant and homeowner in the U.S, has these. The goal being to keep an area functioning as harmoniously as possible. Zoning laws are expected to be designed to respect these rights as are County laws that include acceptable noise and lighting levels within an area.</p> <p>I realize that outdoor athletic activities are exempt from Arlington County noise laws because otherwise these events would have to be entirely disallowed. Still, this should not be license to disregard the current zoning of the surrounding area of an athletic field. Please keep this in mind when considering adding additional hours or lighting, especially where fields are very close to homes. Commercial zoning is purposely and reasonably separate from residential, and it looks like changes are being considered that could have fields operating closer to commercial zoning standards.</p> <p>The County has experienced significant land loss due to building over the last 10 years. Environmental considerations, especially flooding and habitat area, are even more important today than 10 years ago. At Williamsburg, for example, one time after a very heavy rainfall, the artificial turf fields flooded resulting in debris and damage in the neighborhood. This may be a place where returning to turf fields at replacement time is the wiser option.</p> <p>The neighborhood around Williamsburg is habitat area to many species of fauna. The elementary school, Discovery, on its campus is environmentally oriented. Facts like these should be considered in any neighborhood setting. A certain amount of quietness and natural nighttime darkness contributes to the health of the fauna. Please feel free to contact me about the prolific fauna living in this area.</p> <p>I trust that you will carefully consider the locations where changes might be made and keep priorities and location context in mind. I hope that the County finds the best way to reasonably accommodate as many athletes as possible within our finite spaces.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
10/17/2021 8:02	<p>I have the following questions/comments on the October 18 staff presentation to the PSMP Implementation Committee.</p> <p>1. The proposed definition of Field Utilization is a “comparison of athletic field reservations to the athletic field availability framework.” Some members of the public have, at times, expressed skepticism about the accuracy/reliability of the reservation system. How do “field reservations” relate to actual field use? Are there no-shows, or multiple field reservations by groups, or cancellations that may reduce actual field use? Do we know? If we don’t have a good measure of actual field use over time, can we obtain one? Are some times and</p>

dates and fields simply unpopular and thus avoided by user groups, yet are commonly available for rectangular sports?

2. The field hours identified in the presentation for specific fields seem to differ from those first provided at the Committee's December, 2019 meeting. For example, the original numbers for Williamsburg # 1 field in December 2019 for FY 19 were 1551 "allocated" hours. That's similar to the written estimate provided by Robin Leonard of DPR to the Williamsburg Lights Working Group in October 2016, (correcting earlier erroneous DPR estimates) of 1,430 hours of "scheduled" use for that unlighted synthetic turf field. The current presentation estimates 533 "available" hours for the spring season and 270 "available" hours for the fall season, for a total of 803 "available" hours. I realize that the current estimate is based on the new definitions and use assumptions and is limited to the spring/fall season, instead of the full year.

Nevertheless, the difference seems quite large to me — an almost 50% difference, even though the presentation itself concedes that "organized sports in Arlington operate in two primary seasons." The same discrepancies are found in the other examples I looked at — Washington & Liberty, Barcroft #1, and Boeing #3. For those fields too, the current numbers for "available" hours are about half the numbers estimated by DPR for "allocable" hours in December 2019. But perhaps I'm missing something fundamental, which is often the case when I try to understand the scheduling/reservation/allocation/use/availability definitions — terms that seem, at times, to be used virtually interchangeably. At the very least, it would help the reader if the County clearly showed how the 1551 allocated hours for Williamsburg Field # 1 became 803 "available hours" currently, and provided the same analysis for the other examples. The public could then understand and comment on the appropriateness and effect of the various use assumptions apparently invoked at specific fields and that generated more modest hours of actual "availability."

3. Even if some fields are found to be over-subscribed (an assumption that I do not think is yet borne out), are there other fields available for use to accommodate registrants? Put another way, to what extent does the convenience of users play an outsized role in over- and under-subscription of athletic fields? County fiscal policy and general park efficiency would seem, to me, to strongly support maximum use of County fields in the aggregate (locations, days of the week, times), even if users would be required to travel a few extra miles or would prefer or play at other times and dates. (I note that Boeing Field # 3's "scheduled" hours are computed to be less than 75% of its "available" hours, as one example. The excess fall hours available at Boeing Field # 3 would, by themselves, be sufficient to cover the fall deficit computed for Williamsburg Field # 1. The PSMP recommended, as I recall, that Long

Bridge be fully developed as a year-long sports complex for outdoor soccer. Thus, some of the Boeing Field time presumably could be filled by those seeking to play at Williamsburg).

Has the County conducted a similar “availability” analysis for all of its athletic fields? If so, what is the outcome? Net surplus; net deficit?

How has the increased drop-in community use being proposed at other fields affected fields like Williamsburg, which are primarily permit? Has the new expanded drop-in hours at other fields (Long Bridge #1 and Long Bridge #4, for example) put additional pressure on Williamsburg and other fields to service league play?

4. There is little discussion in the slides of the recommended end time of 11:00 p.m. for adult users of lighted fields. It’s based, as far as I can tell, on the survey for the first public engagement opportunity, to which only 102 respondents replied. This was, I believe, simply an opportunity sample — an outreach by Internet to County residents (although perhaps I’m wrong). It could not be used as a surrogate for the “statistically valid survey” required in the Public Spaces Master Plan to refine use assumptions and derive a more valid Level of Service number. Even given its limited purpose here, the survey — which dealt solely with athletic demand and field utilization and not neighborhood expectations for quiet enjoyment — likely skewed responses to correspond with the County park curfew — 11:00 p.m. Nevertheless, a large number of commenters did comment that, whatever the end time established at lighted fields, that time should be much earlier where residents live near the fields. I did not see any consideration of that caveat in DRP’s current use assumptions.

I hope that the second public engagement opportunity, apparently scheduled for some time later this year, will include questions that raise the issues that have been central to field lighting for years — the adverse effects of athletic field lighting, noise, parking, and other features on neighborhood quality of life. Looking at end times alone, without a neighborhood context, serves only the interests of field users and will provide little information to guide sensible public policy.

5. What’s the status of the SA-3 and PS zoning studies that will examine the County’s need for relief from height, parking, set-back and other current restrictions? As I understood it from prior meetings, the zoning issues have been included in Zoning’s work plan, so presumably a schedule (however tentative) has been prepared, together with opportunities for public involvement. I may have missed it, but I did not see the studies identified on

	<p>the Zoning Department’s list of on-going and planned studies. Is there an updated schedule?</p> <p>It would be great if you could distribute these questions to the Committee prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Thanks very much.</p>
<p>10/18/2021 12:04</p>	<p>1. <b>Decisions on lighting athletic fields must consider the impact on close-by neighbors.</b> In the Williamsburg Field Working Group process and the POPS review, County Board members asked that impact on the neighbors be considered in lighting decisions. Since sound energy dissipates dramatically with distance from the source, distance from homes should be critical to lighting decisions. A home 300’ away gets 1/9 the noise impact of one 100’ away.</p> <p>However, the January engagement opportunity asked nothing about proximity to neighbors, though some of the responses spoke to that point directly. The presentation for this meeting speaks to end times for play on lighted fields in terms of age of the participants, but says nothing about distance from homes (or impact on the very young or old residents therein).</p> <p>2. <b>Recommendations for increasing field capacity must be based on actual field utilization, not just scheduled field utilization. It is a fact that actual field utilization is much lower than scheduled field utilization.</b> This was demonstrated by the use of roving DPR field monitors in 2016-17:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Of 54 evenings with enough data for analysis, on 31 evenings at least half of fields observed were either unutilized or underutilized by sports organizations assigned to use them.</i></li> <li>• <i>On 10 evenings, substantially more than half the fields were unutilized or underutilized.</i></li> </ul> <p>If these data are considered outdated, then collect current or future data to update them. If roving monitors are too expensive, ask neighbors to take data.</p> <p>If scheduled utilization is used to forecast capacity needs, then the County may spend its very limited capital funds on acquisition or turf conversion or lights that are needed in theory but not in the real world.</p> <p>Board members asked that DPR and this group use actual utilization data to avoid the risk of unneeded spending. But tonight’s presentation is based entirely on scheduled utilization data with no mention of whether or how actual data will be obtained and used.</p>

	<p>When will DPR and this group begin to use actual field utilization data and consider impacts on neighbors, as Board members have requested? Thank you for listening.</p>
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