



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: Councilmember Donald Rocha
SUBJECT: SOFTBALL COMPLEX
DATE: December 8, 2014

Approved *Don Rocha* Date *12-8-14*
PH

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the staff recommendation with the following additions:

1. Once again, state the Council's position that this facility is intended to be a citywide softball complex that accommodates league and tournament play, not a home field for little league baseball nor one specific little league program.
2. As part of the discussion of the operational model that will return to Council next year, direct staff to reach out to all San Jose softball leagues, adult and youth, for the purpose of gauging their interest in using the facility for daily play, seasonal play, tournament play or any other type of play.

ANALYSIS

I support moving ahead with four fields at the Arcadia site. My understanding from staff is that they are intended to be full-sized fields with a 300 ft. outfield that can accommodate adult softball leagues. I had hoped we would be able to build a larger facility, but I don't seek to rehash that issue now.

If we are to proceed at Arcadia, however, the project needs to be built as a citywide tournament facility in accordance with the original intent of the bond. In her memo dated December 5, 2014, Councilmember Herrera writes: "Evergreen residents have been waiting for more than 14 years for the new, lighted ball fields to be constructed for adult and youth softball and baseball league play." I am concerned by Councilmember Herrera's continued insistence on characterizing this facility as primarily serving the Evergreen area, the district that she serves. Residents across the entire city, not just the Evergreen community, have been waiting for this complex. Given Councilmember Herrera's statements, I recommend the Council reiterate that the purpose of this facility is to serve the entire city, not just the Evergreen area.

Little League or Youth Softball?

Staff does not go into detail as to the operational plans for the facility in their staff report, but the EIR addendum for the project does provide some operational detail as part of the project description (see attachment.) Staff plans to operate the facility for adult softball on evenings and weekends, while preserving a 4:00-5:30 PM slot for little league games and practices.

We are building a softball facility, not a little league facility. In my opinion, the mission of our citywide softball complex should not be to provide fields for one little league based in Evergreen, especially given that there may be girls youth softball leagues that could use the fields between 4:00 and 5:30 PM. There may be a real need for girls' youth softball fields, but we haven't done the work to determine whether that's the case. Thus, I recommend conducting outreach to San Jose softball leagues to identify who may be interested in using the facility. The Council should make a decision on this matter that is supported by full information, not leave it as a foregone conclusion.

Operational Model

The operational model for the facility has yet to be determined. When the Council does eventually decide on an operational model, my expectation is that staff will provide rigorous analysis of both an in-house model and a contract operator model. While contracting out may sometimes be cheaper, in-house service provision has its own advantages. I believe there is great value in having ambitious and engaged staff in PRNS who are motivated to provide excellent programming across all of our facilities in service to the public. My hope is that Parks staff will see the softball complex as an exciting opportunity to serve the public, not a burden to be passed off to someone else. That said, whatever staff's ultimate recommendation, all options should be given careful analysis.

Cost of the Land

The staff report for this item contains the following passage on page 3:

During discussions leading up to the February 4, 2014 City council meeting, Seller offered to convey two additional acres of property to the City to accommodate a fourth field, but indicated that City may be asked to pay for this additional acreage.

Whatever discussion may have occurred offline in advance of the February 4th meeting, the City Council discussion at that meeting seemed to indicate that the land would be provided for free. During the course of the discussion on February 4th, Councilmember Herrera made the following statement:

We now have the ability because the land is donated that we can spend the \$9.5 million which is the main part of the money in the bond measure that would go to build the fields and not to have to buy the land.

Even if staff wasn't in a position to correct this statement at the time, they certainly could have engaged the Council in a subsequent discussion of deal points, in either open or closed session. Unfortunately, that did not happen; nearly a year after the land was heralded as free, we learn that we'll actually have to pay for it out of bond proceeds.

I do appreciate that \$500,000 for the land in question is still a good deal for the City. What does disappoint me, however, is that staff did not keep the Council informed and meaningfully engaged in the negotiating process. I would have liked to discuss with staff whether there was some alternative arrangement that could have allowed us to obtain the land for free, but I was not given that opportunity.

There was certainly enough time to return to Council in advance of final action. Staff initially estimated that they would return four to six months after the February meeting, but it turned out to be more like ten months. It's frustrating to me that the Council was given the impression that there was an urgent need to act before the February decision, and then not kept informed or engaged when it turned out that there was much more time than we were lead to believe.

Arcadia Softball Fields

Approximately 15 acres of the Evergreen Circle site will be dedicated to the City of San José for development of four fields for softball and (little league) baseball use. With the exception of the parkland dedication, the ball fields will be developed separately of the proposed Evergreen Circle project. A conceptual site plan of the ball fields layout is presented in Figure 8. The components and operations of the fields are described below.

- Four lighted ball park fields to be used for (adult) softball and little league baseball.
- An approximately 2,400 to 4,700 square-foot, one to two story concessions building in the central portion of the site, containing concessions, restrooms, and related space.
- Spectator seating (i.e., moveable bleachers) around the fields.
- Parking facilities in two surface lots for a total of 244 vehicles (refer to Figure 8).
- A central public address (PA) system for announcements to all fields. The PA system will not be used for game commentary.
- A chain link fence around the fields ranging from 4-16 feet in height. Netting may also be required in some areas.

Operations: The ball park fields will be owned by the City and will be operated by the City or a private vendor. The fields will be used primarily for adult softball games in the evenings (5:30 PM to a maximum of 10 PM) and weekends (8 AM to a maximum of 10 PM). A secondary use will be for afternoon little league practices and games (4 PM to 5:30 PM). Schedules will accommodate up to three weeknight games and nine weekend games per field per day. Average attendance for softball games is 24-30 players with 10-15 spectators per field. Average attendance for little league practices and games is 15-20 players and coaches on each field. Maximum attendance for occasional special events is estimated at fewer than 400. Schedules will accommodate up to three weeknight games and nine weekend games per field per day.

Access/Parking. The parking lots for the ball fields are proposed north and east of the fields (see Figure 8). The northern lot will be accessed from two driveways off of Quimby Road, and the eastern lot will be accessed via a new roadway that will be part of the Evergreen Circle development, which will extend from Quimby Road to Capitol Expressway.

Grading. Minor grading is proposed to smooth the site for the proposed ball field use.

Landscaping. The project proposes landscaping along most of the site's perimeter and within the parking areas.