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# Memo

To: COG Parks Capital Committee  
c/o Ronald J. Woodhead, Director  
From: Jim Pashek  
Date: April 9, 2010

**Re: Information requested by the COG Parks Capital Committee**

This week, you asked us to comment on several issues raised at the last COG Parks Capital Committee meeting. The topics included:

- A list of park improvements if the budget was \$5.5 million and \$10.1 million.
- Comparison of numbers of sorts fields in communities with similar populations
- More information on the recommended Hess Field improvements

**1. Project Scope with a \$5.5 million or a \$10.1 million budget**

***Potential projects with a budget of \$5.5 million.***

Using the analysis developed for the last Parks Capital Meeting with a budget of about \$8.1 million, we looked at what could be eliminated for this first phase of work.

**HESS FIELD COMPLEX:**

For this budget, we see little change in the budget for Hess Field. We have heard a range from almost no cost to over \$1 million. This remains an unknown until a master plan is done for that project, decisions on the quality of facility to provide and whether public money and prevailing wage rates are used for improvements. For this estimate, we still recommend allocating \$500,000 for Hess Field.

**OAK HALL PARKLANDS:**

Oak Hall remains an important part of the mix of services needed to address softball needs currently and into the future in the region. The \$8.1 million scenario only graded the park, improved the park entrance and built a gravel parking lot and three softball fields. There is little to reduce from this scenario as none of the other park amenities are included in this estimate. We recommend keeping Oak Hall at \$2,437,659.

**WHITEHALL ROAD PARKLANDS:**

Whitehall Road has the greatest potential for reducing project scope. The original estimate included development of all 17 fields for \$5,210,014. By eliminating the 25 acres yet to be acquired, we could reduce that number by about \$1,713,000. By deferring the western half of the 75 acres, leaving four rectangular fields and an area set aside in the future for tennis that could accommodate two more rectangular fields temporarily, you would be able to have a project worth about \$2,537,000. Add back a connection from the main parking lot to the Musser Gap Trail, increases the project by about \$17,000.

Hess Field	\$ 500,000
Oak Hall	\$2,438,000
Whitehall Road -	\$2,537,000
Musser Gap Trail Conn.	<u>\$ 17,000</u>
Total	\$5,492,000

***Potential projects with a budget of \$10.1 million.***

Starting with the development of \$8.1 million in park development discussed at the last Parks Capital Committee meeting, we have an opportunity to enhance the park development with the addition of \$2,000,000. In addition to the base development of all of the fields in all three parks, we propose the addition of:

Hess Field	\$0	
Oak Hall		
Perimeter Loop Trail	\$176,100	
Restroom/Conc.	\$274,200	
Playground	\$191,100	
Picnic Shelter	<u>\$ 69,000</u>	
SUBTOTAL	\$710,400	
Whitehall Road		
Perimeter Loop Trail	\$187,100	
Musser Gap Conn.	\$ 17,000	
Maintenance Bldg.	\$570,500	
Playground	\$375,000	
Picnic Shelters (2)	<u>\$136,400</u>	
SUBTOTAL	\$1,286,000	
Total Additional Cost		\$1,996,400

**2. Comparison of numbers of sports fields in communities with similar populations**

There is no data base that I am aware of that lists communities of a certain size and the number of sports fields they have. There are so many variables in terms of local interest (we are working in Sunbury where field hockey is very big and they can't get enough fields for that group); terrain (in western PA, we would kill for level land as large as Whitehall Road – the steep slopes limit opportunities to provide fields) and affluence (there are poorer communities that do not have enough money to meet basic public safety needs and could not imagine spending a dollar for recreation fields.)

That is why the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) originally tried to develop a general, national standard for sports fields needs based on population. We include that older standard in our Needs Analysis in the Oak Hall Master Plan. More recently, the NRPA recognized the wide range of local variations that impacted those standards and went to a new approach which was the level of service analysis to determine sports field needs. That analysis was also done and included in the Oak Hall Master Plan. This process is fairly involved, including calculating the practices and game times needed by existing teams for each sport, correlated to available times of coaches (we have worked in communities where coaches don't like to have practices or games on Friday night) and local standards (communities that do not want to have games on Sunday).

Finally, after having looked at the older NRPA standard based on fields/1000 population, and the more accurate level of service analysis, we sat down and met with each of the sports groups and talked to them about their needs and how many kids they had in their programs. Based on not one but several of these evaluations, we developed a recommendation for the number of fields shown in the two master plans and based on four softball fields at Hess Field. This recommendation is probably conservative and will fall short of needs in the next few years.

One final note regarding a Comprehensive Recreation Plan. Pashek Associates has probably done more of these DCNR-funded plans than any consultant in PA. I can assure you that a Comp. Rec. Plan would not have any more detailed analysis of needs than what was done for the Oak Hall Master Plan.

### **3. More information on Immediate Upgrades to Hess Field**

In order to develop a strategy for improving safety at Hess Field while deferring other proposed improvements, we have developed a revised version of our field estimate presented to the COG in October of 2009. This estimate was developed to address all Immediate (high hazard) and Short-term (safety and playability) needs at the Hess Softball Complex. It is the COG's expectation to address these issues in order that the fields can be used on a temporary basis for adult softball until other regional adult fields are available at Oak Hall. It is recommended that the Hess Softball Field Complex will ultimately be developed as a youth softball complex.

It is important for the COG to understand that while the improvements described herein address many of the complex's safety and playability issues, they do not address them all. The Mid and Long-Range recommendations of the Feasibility Study will need to be implemented to provide for the greatest measure of safety and playability. Further, it is recommended that a master site plan be completed in order to avoid duplication or inefficiencies. The development of Oak Hall should proceed as quickly as is reasonably prudent to meet the unmet demand for adult softball and allowing for conversion of Hess Field to a youth softball complex.

It must also be noted that these cost estimates and recommended modifications are being made prior to the completion of the master site plan. Without an overall plan for

development, the actual costs for completing the modifications may vary from the estimates presented here. Additionally, modifications made as part of this initial upgrade may be incongruent with the final master plan and need to be removed or redone in the future.

<b>Immediate and Short Term Improvements</b>	
Estimate of Probable Cost	
Field 1	\$34,275
Field 2	\$47,450
Field 3	\$34,775
Field 4	\$52,200
Support Facilities	\$83,200
Additional recommended modifications	\$90,000
Design and Permitting	\$51,285
Contingency	\$35,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$428,185</b>

The costs provided assume the following:

1. Completion of all Immediate (High Hazard) and Short-term (Safety and Usability) recommendations in the Hess Softball Complex Feasibility Study.
2. Removal of the concrete block storage room located behind the first base side dugout on Field #1.
3. Reduction in the distance from home plate to the outfield fence on field #2 to 225'.
4. Demolition of the existing concession stand and restroom. Portable toilets will be used until new restrooms are constructed.
5. Installation of perimeter drains on all fields.
6. Expansion of the entrance road and add turning lanes at the exits
7. Field #3 will not be used during times when the sun shines directly in the players eyes. These times tend to be early to mid-morning and late-afternoon to early-evening.