

City Announces Multiple Athletic Field Projects

In response to recreation goals highlighted in the city's Open Space & Recreation Plan and a request by Mayor Donna Holaday in July 2011 to identify possible sites for additional athletic fields, the Field Space Task Force was formed to carry out a needs assessment and recommend an approach to remediating the city's lack of athletic field space. The group identified the need to maximize use of existing fields through reconfiguration, improvement, and increased maintenance and to acquire additional open space for new fields. As a result the city has put together a coordinated capital plan, and is now implementing it on an aggressive schedule. A number of field projects are either underway or on the horizon in Newburyport between now and fall 2016. This initiative from Mayor Holaday's office is managed by Parks Director Lisè Reid in cooperation with NHS Athletic Director Bob Clarke and combines planning and fundraising efforts of the Newburyport Parks, Newburyport Schools, RESTORE our Port Pride, and dedicated volunteers from multiple youth leagues.

NHS World War Memorial Stadium

Completion of the renovation project at the High School's World War Memorial Stadium will happen sooner than originally expected. Project planners had first thought the project might disrupt classes during the 2014-15 school year, with two phases finishing up in time for the spring 2016 sports season. A new plan to combine both the demolition and field construction phases into a single construction period will allow the project to be complete by next September without disrupting classes or sports seasons. The design phase is underway, with the city currently preparing for permitting and the contractor bidding process, which will happen in winter and spring of 2015. Visible demolition and field construction will both take place during summer 2015, starting after school finishes for the year. This approach not only saves the city money by avoiding the costly overtime needs of working during a time when classes are in session, but it allows sports to continue on the stadium field throughout the fall 2014 and spring 2015 seasons, which will also save the city the expensive transportation and rental costs of using outside facilities.

The stadium project scope includes demolition of the failing north side grandstand structure and installation of a synthetic turf playing field. Removal of the grandstand will create a wider playing field, meaning multiple sports can be accommodated. The synthetic turf also facilitates expanded field usage because, unlike natural grass, it does not require rest periods and will remain a safe playing surface despite the highly concentrated usage needs of the city. A focus group of city and school staff, concerned citizens, and athletic field design professionals are studying concerns about installing synthetically in-filled turf and what alternatives exist.

The stadium project is made possible by a Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant, a donation from the Institution for Savings and the fund raising efforts of RESTORE.

90' Diamond & Nock-Molin Multi-Purpose Fields

City officials also plan a new 90-foot baseball diamond as part of a comprehensive reconfiguration and renovation of the fields behind the Nock-Molin school complex. Adding a full-sized diamond will provide much needed playing space for the city's baseball athletes who have long needed another field and who lost two fields when the new Bresnahan School was built. With three high school level teams and private youth leagues in the city, many players have had to travel out of town to practice and play games, costing the city and individual families extra travel expenses, time and facility rental fees.

The city anticipates construction on this site will begin in summer 2015. A long resting period required with any new natural grass field means that the diamond should be ready for play by fall of 2016.

Additionally, overused fields at Nock-Molin are in desperate need of new topsoil, re-seeding and rest. Renovation of those multi-use fields will wait until spring 2016, when the new stadium is available to receive athletes who normally play on Nock-Molin fields. A plan to use natural sod, while more expensive than seed, means the field can be ready for play when football teams begin practicing in August 2016.

Funding for both phases of this project hinges on a public vote. The vote will allow surplus funds from the Bresnahan School building project to be re-allocated to replacing the full-size diamond that was lost as a result of that project. The School Building Committee, City Council and School Committee have already voiced their support of that re-allocation. Residents will have the chance to show their support for the project at a special referendum vote on December 9 — a move which will not increase taxpayer commitment, but simply re-allocate use of previously committed funding. Additional fundraising efforts will be undertaken by city officials and the RESTORE our Port Pride group as needed.

Cherry Hill Soccer Field

Construction of a new full-sized, natural grass soccer field at Cherry Hill will address the city's need for additional playing fields as well as parking and site security concerns at the Cherry Hill facility. The project plays a key role in supporting city-wide demand for field space and will provide space for many players who will be relocated during the final field project planned for the Bradley Fuller Athletic Field Complex.

Construction is targeted to begin this spring. City officials and Newburyport Youth Soccer Association (NYSA) are seeking further grant funding to complete the entire project in one phase and finish construction by end of summer 2015. The new field will be ready to support limited use by spring 2016 and to fully support NYSA and high school teams for play by fall 2016.

The Cherry Hill soccer field project reflects a true public-private partnership between the city and NYSA. The project is funded in large part by the NYSA with additional funding from the Community Preservation Act. Though the project is now under management by the city Parks, NYSA volunteers have invested countless hours in planning and managing the project to this point and will continue to assist with project management and fundraising.

Bradley Fuller Athletic Field Complex

An upgrade to the Bradley Fuller complex includes plans for an expanded track worthy of the city's championship track team, addressing drainage issues to make the field behind the track fully functional, installation of a synthetic turf field within the track which will allow for increased field usage, as well as

provisions for increased parking and improved traffic flow, stadium seating, storage and concession facilities.

The project is expected to enter the planning phase in fall 2015, to be constructed in summer 2016. The project should be complete by fall 2016.

City officials plan to use a portion of surplus funds from the Bresnahan School building project for this final project as well, so funding for this project also hinges on the results of the December 9 vote. City and school officials have begun discussions with the Friends of Newburyport Track and Newburyport Youth Lacrosse Association about project planning and partnering to raise additional project funding.

The schematic listed below shows how the various project timelines intersect and where athletes will play during project construction.

Increased Field Maintenance

A focus on improved field maintenance plays a large role in the field projects initiative. City and school officials acknowledge that increased maintenance efforts are required to maximize the lasting impact of new and renovated fields. City and school staff have teamed up to funnel more resources into field maintenance through careful tracking of private league donations, and combining resources to contract with high quality field maintenance professionals. Officials are confident that by joining forces with private youth and adult leagues, local businesses, and RESTORE Our Port Pride, a commitment to field maintenance means current projects will have a lasting impact on helping to solve the city's field space challenges.

Inquiries should be directed to Parks Director Lisë Reid by email at parks@cityofnewburyport.com or by calling 978-465-4462.

PROJECTED TIMELINE FOR ATHLETIC FIELD BUILDING PROJECTS

Summer 2014	Fall 2014	Winter 2015	Spring 2015	Summer 2015	Fall 2015	Winter 2016	Spring 2016	Summer 2016	Fall 2016
		Cherry Hill Parcel B Soccer Field Bid	Cherry Hill Parcel B Soccer Field (Build & Rest) <i>Athletes displaced:</i> Some NYSA practices to other soccer fields as available				Cherry Hill Parcel B Soccer Field Limited Use Use by younger teams only		All fields playable
	Stadium Design & Bid			Stadium Construction, Demo & Turf Install <i>Athletes displaced:</i> None					All fields playable
	90' Diamond & Nock Molin Multi-purpose Field Renovations Design and Bid			90' Diamond Build & Rest <i>Athletes displaced Fall 2015:</i> NHS JV Soccer to Cashman Soccer Football practice to Nock multi-purpose fields					All fields playable
							Nock Molin Multi-purpose Field Renovations Build & Rest <i>Athletes displaced in Spring 2016</i> NHS lacrosse to stadium Youth Lacrosse to Fuller track and back field, Cashman Soccer Youth Soccer Cash, Cherry Hill (2 fields), Fuller (games only)		
					Bradley Fuller Athletic Complex Design & Bid			Bradley Fuller Athletic Complex Construction <i>Athletes displaced:</i> None	All fields playable