



TOWNSHIP OF FERGUSON

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**Parks and Recreation Committee
Meeting Agenda
Greenbriar Saybrook Park
Monday, August 13, 2018
4:00 p.m.**

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
- III. CITIZEN INPUT
- IV. WHITEHALL ROAD REGIONAL PARK DISCUSSION IN REFERENCE TO RECENT LETTER

Narrative

This agenda item was requested by Andrew McKinnon at previous meeting. On March 21st, 2018, the Township Manager mailed a letter to the Centre Region Parks and Recreation Authority (CRPRA) to share the comments made by the Board at the Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting on March 19 (see attached). The Nittany Valley Environmental Coalition (NVEC) also followed up with a letter on July 8 to CRPRA to express their interests and requests for the Park. Matt Vidic, President of Centre Soccer Association, also sent a letter, dated July 13, to CRPRA to express their interests and request for the Park. The three (3) letters are part of this Agenda packet.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee *discuss* the agenda item.

V. REVIEW AND DISCUSS SUBURBAN PARK MASTER PLAN UPDATE PROPOSALS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Narrative

The Suburban Park Master Plan Update Request for Proposals was released on Thursday, June 21 by the Assistant to the Manager. Staff has reviewed, scored and ranked five proposals. Staff participating as reviewers of the proposals were Dave Modricker, Public Works Director, Ray Stolinas, Planning Director, Centrice Martin, Assistant to the Manager, and Dave Pribulka, Township Manager. We individually reviewed and scored each of the 5 proposals prior to meeting for a discussion. As part of our discussion, we concluded that three of the proposals did not meet the criteria (as outlined in the attached rubric) including the budget for this project.

Staff asked that the Parks and Recreation Committee members to review and score the top two proposals. Staff asked the Parks and Recreation Committee to bring their completed rubric to the next meeting, scheduled for Monday, August 13, for the committee to discuss and collectively provide one recommendation for the Board of Supervisors to consider at the Board of Supervisors Regular meeting scheduled for Monday, August 20.

Recommended motion: That the Ferguson Township Parks and Recreation Committee recommend the Board of Supervisors award the Suburban Park Master Plan contract to _____.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee ***discuss*** the submitted proposals and provide a final recommendation to be presented to Board of Supervisors at the Regular Meeting on August 20.

VI. VOLUNTEERING AT COMMUNITY EVENTS

Narrative

This agenda item was suggested by the Parks Committee's Chair, Niki Tourscher, and discussed with Centrice Martin during their 1:1 meeting, held on Tuesday, July 31. Niki expressed interest in discussing this item with the Committee to determine if there is interest, and if so, what types of community events members may be interested in volunteering at together, as schedules permit.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee ***discuss*** the agenda item.

VII. SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER PARKS AND REC COMMITTEE MEETING LOCATIONS

Narrative

Staff is requesting the Committee discuss meeting location for October to allow sufficient time for pavilion reservations to be made at local parks.

VIII. REPORTS

1. Staff Report
2. Centre Region Parks and Recreation Authority Report

IX. OPEN DISCUSSION

X. ADJOURNMENT



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March 21, 2018

Ms. Kathleen Matason, Chairwoman
c/o Pam Salokangas, Director
Centre Region Parks & Recreation Authority
Centre Region Council of Governments
2643 Gateway Drive, Suite 1
State College, PA 16801

Re: Ferguson Township Comments on Whitehall Road Regional Park

Dear Ms. Matason:

At the Regular Meeting of the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors on Monday, March 19th, the following comments were approved by the Board to be submitted for consideration by the Centre Region Parks and Recreation Authority as the land development plan is prepared for Whitehall Road Regional Park:

- The Board wishes to encourage permeable paving surfaces to be used in the parking areas. If permeable parking is not possible, then paved parking is preferred over gravel parking.
- Consideration should be given to the undeveloped portions of the park after the initial phase is constructed. Succession and reforestation should be given consideration, particularly since there is no current timetable for development of future phases of the park.
- The Board requests that the Authority refrain from grading the undeveloped portions of the park until such time as they are ready to be developed. This will be crucial in preserving small animal and bird habitats in the area.
- The Board would like to request that the Authority revise and update the Park Master Plan after the development of the initial phase. The update should consider all future phases of Whitehall Road Regional Park.
- The Board encourages consideration of green infrastructure and low impact parkland development with the development of the first and subsequent phases of the park. This is consistent with the strategies identified in the current Park Master Plan's emphasis on sustainable parkland development through the Sustainable Sites Initiative.
- Mitigation of noise and light pollution should be provided where possible. This may include screening and natural buffering with sufficient height to prevent spillover lighting from impacting adjacent properties.

I respectfully request that you consider these comments as the Authority proceeds with the development of the first phase of Whitehall Road Regional Park. On behalf of the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors, thank you for your service to the Centre Region Parks and Recreation Authority, and thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding these comments.

Sincerely,
Township of Ferguson

David Pribulka
Township Manager

c: Correspondence file
Jim Steff, COG Executive Director

— A Home Rule Municipality —



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July 8, 2018

Ms. Kathleen Matason, Chair
Centre Region Parks & Recreation Authority (CRPRA) Board
kdm1@psu.edu

Ms. Pamela Salokangas, Director
Centre Region Parks & Recreation (CRPR)
psalokangas@crcog.net

2643 Gateway Drive, Suite #1
State College, PA 16801

Re: Whitehall Road Regional Parklands

Dear Ms. Matason and Ms. Salokangas:

The proposed regional park design at Whitehall Road has a long way to go before it meets the agreed-upon needs of our local population. Ask people in our region, or anywhere, what a "park" is, and they imagine something very different from this plan. CRPR's own surveys, from at least 2008 on, show ten times the desire for open space (trails, trees and flowers, picnic areas, sledding areas) as there is for structured sports. This is consistent with surveys from around the nation.

Yet the proposed Phase One of Whitehall Road Regional Park devotes a great deal of area, and by far the greatest tax dollars, for organized sports and its parking, rather than for what the

community says it needs. A great local park, on the other hand, might more closely resemble Penn State Arboretum or Pittsburgh's Schenley Park.

The Heart of Nittany Valley

The site of the proposed Whitehall Road Regional Park is one of the most stunning natural areas in Central Pennsylvania. It offers magnificent vistas of Mount Nittany, Tussey Ridge and thousands of acres of open fields and meadows. It defines the essence of the term "viewshed." I strongly encourage any stakeholder who has not walked this site to do so, while all its potential can still be imagined.

Natural beauty is precious. It is why people love to live here. Particularly since the Penn State/Toll Brothers chapter, policymakers must consider not only built fields and facilities, but also preservation of resources, undeveloped views and open space, and Pennsylvania's wildlife in determining the final mix of amenities for our region. Accordingly, Nittany Valley Environmental Coalition encourages the Centre Region Parks and Recreation Authority Board to take a broad view of what constitutes "Parklands."

The current plan places far too much emphasis on team sports. This is not the place to emphasize those.

1. NVEC SUPPORT FOR FERGUSON TOWNSHIP LETTER

The Nittany Valley Environmental Coalition strongly supports the letter of March 21, 2018 to the CRPRA Board, written by Ferguson Township Manager David Pribulka on behalf of the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors. The Ferguson Township letter asks that the next planning and design phases adhere to the already agreed-upon principles stated in the Whitehall Road Regional Parklands Master Site Plan ("Whitehall Parklands") document created in August 2010 for the Centre Region Council of Governments. The document was the result of a comprehensive stakeholder-supported master plan process.

Ferguson's letter emphasizes the following points, presented here with expanded NVEC comments:

Encourage permeable paving for parking and roads. Encourage paved rather than gravel surfaces.

Additionally:

1. Design number of parking spaces not to perceived desires, but to code minimums.
2. Shade paved areas—both roads and parking—with trees to reduce heat islands. We understand that shading was originally planned, but later removed. This is contrary to all good planning practice in the last 20 years.

3. Refer to LEED standards for site and other facility planning. Although certification is not required, these offer realistic and proven design guidelines.

Do not "improve" undeveloped portions of park. Since there is no timetable for future phases: Request no grading; preserve natural habitat. Consider succession planting and reforestation.

Additionally:

1. Do not grade either Phase One areas labeled "Future," or Phase Two areas. Do not disturb this local birding hotspot.
2. As this is recent farmland, with heavy spraying, wildlife and beneficial insects have been impaired. Management plans must include cessation of herbicides and pesticides.
3. Consider the Wildlife Management Institute's Young Forest Guide principles, allowing areas for brush and young trees to grow up. These areas are "powerhouse" habitats for grouse, whip-poor-wills, reptiles, including turtles, and migrating birds.

Update the Parklands Master Plan for subsequent phases as Phase One is developed.

Additionally:

1. Make this an inclusive and transparent process, with broad community input.

Green infrastructure and low impact parkland for this and subsequent phases. Consistent with 2010 planning document, through the Sustainable Sites Initiative.

Mitigate light and noise pollution. Consider screening and natural buffering with height to prevent spillover light to adjacent properties.

Additionally:

1. NVEC respectfully requests that there be no site lighting. Besides the initial and yearly expense, night lighting affects not only adjacent properties, but will be visible for miles. It disrupts views of the night sky, bird migration and human health.
2. Consider stargazing as a popular, free outdoor activity that is difficult in town. Ideally, consider a sky observatory to complement PSU Davies Lab.
3. If there is lighting, it should conform to International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) standards, with zero off-site light spillage. Security lighting, if any, should be by motion-detector only.
4. Noise: NVEC respectfully requests no amplification/announcement systems. Pine Grove Mills already hears both Kocher Stables and Beaver Stadium loudspeakers. Loudspeakers here would be highly disturbing to adjacent and distant residential areas.
5. For noise control, establish hours of operation, and standards for activities and decibel levels in accordance with local ordinances, police, and community wishes.

2. RECAP OF WHITEHALL PARKLANDS PRINCIPLES

NVEC respectfully offers reminders of these principles from Whitehall Parklands:

Plan first for the views and natural areas, then for the ballfields. Chapter One of Whitehall Parklands: The site is "*exceptional in its scenic position with outstanding valley views*" and has "*spectacular...scenic values.*" Any coach will tell athletes: "Keep your eye on the ball." Views like these are vital for visitors, far less so for athletes.

Less is More. While recognizing a need for active playing fields, give top priority to lifetime activities. Or to simple relaxation. Consider also that sometimes the best thing is "nothing". One of America's most iconic park features, Central Park's Sheep Meadow, has no structures or structured activity. Reserve Whitehall Parkland's best view areas for non-sports use. From Whitehall Parklands: "*...diversity of complementary activities is important to creation of a great park.*"

Xeriscaping. 1. Plant native grass, shrub and tree species that, once established, require no watering, herbicides or pesticides. This provides tremendous yearly savings in maintenance. As a bonus, these will allow pollinator, beneficial insect, and bird populations to rebound. 2. Carry out sports turf design, and a management program, that reflects this.

Invasive-species control. Invasive plants are a growing problem in Ferguson Township and statewide. Invasives crowd out native plants, starving birds and wildlife; this cost must be included in operations budgeting.

3. ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FROM NVEC

Eight years have elapsed since the original Whitehall Parklands plan. Much has changed since then, and current planning must reflect this.

Maintain safe water supplies. Whitehall Parklands is above and within the recharge area of the Harter and Thomas well fields providing drinking water to 75,000 State College area residents, above fragile karst limestone geology prone to sinkholes and fractures.

1. Construction and operation must not risk the safety of nearby State College Borough Water Authority wells and Slab Cabin Run. Accordingly, re-grade as little as possible of either Phase One or Phase Two. Do not re-grade now for future facilities.
2. Plan now for who is responsible if wells or stream are damaged.
3. Consider having the State College Borough Water Authority board certify the project as non-risk, absolving the Parks Authority and COG of liability for damages.

Provide the full range of amenities at every phase, including Phase One

At every phase, the Parklands should contain the full blend of active, passive and natural areas, in similar proportions to those at completion of all phases. Phase One must, at a minimum, include the community gardens designated as "future" in the site plan.

Providing this full range will be more economical than a plan that prioritizes sports fields. It will help meet the three General Forum goals: small enough to cost \$4.8 million or less; within the (Whitehall Parklands) design area and with a broad enough range of features to be accepted unanimously by municipal legislators as a "regional" park.

Are sports fields in fact necessary? A casual drive around our region shows dozens of empty municipal and school fields everywhere, at all hours. A simple scheduling fix could eliminate or greatly reduce the need for expensive new fields.

1. Confirm current regional capacity and needs.
2. If the desire is for club tournaments, then recognize that concentrating the fields in one location may be ideal, but it is not a need.

Re-Consider Artificial Turf. The manufacture of artificial turf is highly energy-intensive and has severe impacts on water supplies. Surface runoff of rubber and plastic microparticles will discharge directly into our water supply.

1. Consider installing natural turf only, incorporating a "resting" field to allow recovery between seasons/years of use.
2. If artificial turf is used, apply current best practices for sourcing the materials and managing runoff. This discipline is evolving rapidly.

Advanced Engineering for All Aspects. Sophisticated engineering can be applied to all features of the Parklands, not only sports fields.

1. Consider hydroengineering to provide water features, including water for birds and wildlife, and as viewer focal points.
2. Consider engineered gravel for roadways.
3. Incorporate outdoor learning and STEM opportunities for local students.

Consider Topography. The proposed Parklands occupy a "hogback": a high tableland with stunning 360-degree views. No plans or studies, even Whitehall Parklands, have included slope analysis.

1. The best views must be reserved for the amenities that benefit from views.
2. The rise tilts down toward Whitehall road, therefore fields may be highly visible. Consider this in final layout of fields vs. natural areas.

3. Minimize re-grading, cut and fill, and retaining walls. Consider a peer review of current site plan document. There are large potential cost savings even in Phase One.

Fill in the Skipped Steps. Whitehall Parklands was planned in 2010 by an interdisciplinary team of land planners and landscape architects, with input from a wide range of stakeholders. Fast forward to 2018. Construction documents are being drawn for a piece of that plan by a very capable firm, but one whose core business is infrastructure engineering. In my experience, when that much time has elapsed, there is a re-visit of basic programming assumptions and design response.

1. Considering what our community now needs and is requesting, pause and carry out program confirmation.
2. Before proceeding with construction drawings, hire a landscape architect firm to create schematic and preliminary landscape architecture plans that take into account views, slopes, sun; trees and other vegetation, and surface and groundwater.
3. Carry out programming and design in a public process.

Maintain cost effectiveness. Maintain focus on both costs of construction and of subsequent operations. Reduce cost of both, by focusing the stated needs of the Centre Region population.

The Nittany Valley Environmental Coalition thanks you, your staff and all who have worked on this to date, and looks forward to helping to realize the fullest potential of this stunning property as true parklands for the entire community.

Sincerely,
/s/ Randy Hudson

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13 July 2018

Dear Ms. Matason and Ms. Salokangas:

Over the last 13 years, Centre Soccer representatives have attended many public meetings at COG, CRPR, and municipalities, including Ferguson Township, regarding the significant need for the fields planned in Whitehall Regional Park (WRP). The most recent meeting attended was the Ferguson Twp Parks Committee this past Monday where the recent NVEC letter was added for discussion at the next meeting.

NVEC appears to claim to speak for residents of the region. We don't know how many members they speak for, but as Centre Soccer Association, we represent the soccer interests of 800 recent youth players and their families, plus 200 adult soccer players who all are active and engaged members of this community with a passion for team sports. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit, and have operated continuously since 1985. Soccer is an extremely popular team sport in our region that is enjoyed during all seasons of the year by players of all ages, ethnicities, genders, religions, political beliefs, occupations, and walks of life. We also have diverse interests in other activities, but soccer is held in common.

Our members are all predominantly residents of the Centre Region, with Ferguson Township included. The NVEC letter made references regarding WRP that team sports should not be able to use it, would not want to use it, and that they would be better off elsewhere. We strongly disagree with that, and are providing here important information from our experience and perspective as an established community sports organization regarding field needs in the area, and the need for the fields planned in Whitehall Regional Park.

The following letter includes information we have provided many times in the past at various meetings regarding WRP. We will continue to discuss the need for the park, as we have since 2002.

Benefits of Team Sports

Team sports are an important part of our community for youth and adults. Soccer, baseball, softball, lacrosse, flag-football, football, ultimate frisbee, basketball, volleyball, field hockey and rugby are team sports that are popular here.

Youth team sports provide an opportunity for social and physical development. Cooperation, confidence, and leadership skills develop in team environments, as well as the development of physical literacy, physical ability, and a desire to be active. Children playing in team sports are learning positive lifelong habits that promote long term physical & mental wellness.

Providing park fields to non-profit organizations that enable these activities is, and has been, recognized as a positive quality of life amenity for residents in our region, and differentiates us from more remote municipalities outside the COG area where statistically smaller populations and scarcer facilities are barriers for organized team sports to occur.

Regional Field Deficit

We do in fact have a deficit of rectangular fields. The field deficit for soccer is seen every spring when baseball, softball, and rugby are in season and sports like soccer and lacrosse are not able to find enough fields to use. Many grass fields we use are the grass outfields of softball and baseball diamonds, and when those sports play, we are not able to use those fields. This has been going on for at least 16 years.

Centre Soccer programs just this past spring 2018 used the front lawns of two commercial business properties to add missing capacity. At least one other youth sport we are aware of is using an uneven grass meadow at a church. None of these supplemental fields are designed for sports use. These non-sports fields are in use because there are no other options. There is a large deficit.

The 2002 research report for WRP estimated a deficit in our area of -12 soccer fields at that time. Since the time the report was prepared, approximately +6 fields have been added that are used for soccer, but also during that period some fields were lost for public use. Examples of large fields that were lost were the ones used to build Mount Nittany Elementary, and also the field at Boalsburg Elementary was lost when it was purchased by St. Joe's.

In addition, private non-profit schools such as OLV, Grace Prep, and St. Joe's have added sport programs since the report was prepared and are using CRPR fields for their soccer programs and have increased the demand for sport fields in the fall season.

Also during the same time period, additional youth sport programs were introduced that did not exist when the report was prepared and have absorbed any new capacity. Lacrosse, rugby, flag football, and ultimate frisbee have been added since the report, and use the same fields as soccer does.

A substantial number of new programs are using fields since 2002. Our area has not kept up with demand for fields. Whitehall Regional Park was designed to have 9 large rectangular sport fields, and they are all needed.

When Organized Team Sports Occur

The NVEC letter references a casual observation of vacant fields. These are organized team sports, and they occur at times when a significant majority people are available to participate in them. Participation depends on the time of day and season. It is not a "simple scheduling issue", and is in fact an extremely inflexible one. Outdoor youth team sports of all kinds operate around the school day, and rely on daylight to occur. Adult programs operate similarly with active adults available only after regular working hours.

Sports such as soccer use the 6:00-7:30 pm time slot on weekdays during the school year because that is the only time available to provide outdoor, non-school programs in daylight. Youth players need time to get home from school, eat, do homework, and then rely on parents to transport them to their athletic programs. 6:00-7:30 pm is the earliest time of day most people can do this. A casual observer visiting a park field anytime *before the 6:00 pm-7:30 pm* weekday time slot will see the park mostly empty. That is because there are no players available to use it, youth or adult. Saturday programs run from 9:00 am-4:00 pm. Sunday activities need to fit in a window that is after church and before evening Sunday school, usually between Noon-6:00 pm.

An additional note on grass fields is they are subject to overuse, and organized groups using them usually schedule rest days to make sure the grass is maintained. When grass fields are overused, the grass dies, then the field shuts down for a season to allow the grass to regrow, thus compounding the field problem. The sport fields are open for public park use during the times organized groups are not using them.

Other Facilities

Regarding school district facilities, those are built for school programs, and the schools use them for their own programs first. School athletic programs practice from 3:30-5:30 pm on every field they have. Our organization uses school facilities as much we can already. We are using local fields consistently from 6 different governmental entities and private owners currently.

Penn State does not permit the usage of their facilities for our needs. In evaluating the potential to use any facility, the most important factors we consider are the ability to use fields when our members are available, without cancellation by the owner, in addition to other factors such as fees and location.

Regional Features are Needed in a Regional Park

The features in Whitehall Regional Park, which include two fields with artificial turf and lights, significantly improve playing opportunities for athletes of all ages and interests in our community.

The ability to play on a consistent uniform surface not impacted by the weather conditions that normally prevent the use of grass fields, and the ability to play after sunset using lights, each together offset limitations imposed by our climate that outdoor programs in our area face currently.

Also important in the design of Whitehall Regional Park is the inclusion of multiple fields of the largest adult regulation size that increases usage efficiency to permit simultaneous youth events to occur in smaller sections of the same larger fields. In 2013, Centre Soccer Association presented at a Capital Parks Committee meeting about redesigning fields for this purpose, and funded the design fees for it.

Having multiple fields in one location is beneficial for families who have children in different programs scheduled at the same time, and beneficial to larger non-profit sports organizations to monitor & oversee their programs for risk management, and also to provide a central location for equipment access, among other logistical benefits. Locating multiple fields at Whitehall Regional Park in all phases is a necessary and important benefit of the current plan.

Benefits from Artificial Turf and Lights

Artificial turf and lights extend the playing year for players into months that are normally not usable in our climate range.

Temperatures in our region are warm enough for players to play soccer and other sports outdoors consistently March, November and early December, but our climate is either too cold or wet for the use of grass fields, or too dark to be able to play after work or school on weekdays during those months.

Building fields with artificial turf fields in effect triples the amount of use a normal field would receive during the two peak seasons, without degrading the playing surface.

Weekday sessions will be able to go from 6:00-7:30 pm (for MS age and younger), 7:30pm-9pm (for HS aged kids), and 9:00pm-10:30pm (for adults).

Artificial Turf is especially important for adult programs which wear out grass fields much more than youth programs, and are subject to more cancellations on grass fields as a result. The plan for Whitehall Regional Park has allocated two fields for artificial turf with lights. They are needed and will be used extensively when built.

Whitehall Regional Park is the best location for lighted fields because it is centrally located in an area with no existing residences around it. Sports fields built to date are nearly all located in densely populated developments that would be impacted from lighting, if added.

This spring 2018 season is a perfect example of why the artificial turf and lights in the plan for Whitehall Regional Park are needed. Due to weather conditions, the season opened March 26th, and the grass fields were not usable until April 21st and had significant cancellations well into May due to poor field conditions from rain. The spring season for most soccer players is from late March to early June.

Approximately 40% of the season in our program was negatively impacted due to poor field conditions from bad weather. **Centre Soccer Association had 838 registered players impacted negatively by field unavailability in spring 2018.**

The ability to have access to artificial turf with lights would have allowed us to temporarily adjust our schedule to use those facilities until grass was available. The school district owns the only other artificial turf facilities and had priority use for those for their own programs during the poor conditions.

Current Heavy Field Use & Unsatisfied Demand

Centre Soccer had 838 active, registered players in spring 2018. Centre Soccer players of all ages use fields at least 2x per week during two seasons of a minimum of 8 weeks, twice a year (spring & fall). Some programs are extended to 12 weeks and use fields 3x per week (if available), and a few programs operate in the summer.

We conservatively estimate over 26,000 individual uses of area fields by players in our programs occur annually to play soccer, most of which take place during 24 weeks per year. A use is a single instance of a person going to a field. 838 people, going to fields to play 2x per week for 8 weeks, twice a year. Some programs go 4 weeks longer and some more frequently, and some programs occur in the summer, none of which are accounted for in the 26,000 estimate. A more accurate estimate of annual use instances for our programs is likely over 30,000 individual uses per year by people playing soccer.

The limiting factor for the 26,000 field use instances by users in Centre Soccer programs is field availability. Centre Soccer has programs that operate one day per week less than desired because there aren't fields available that can handle the additional uses.

We are offering these user statistics for reference on the scope of our need and current demand, and also as a comparison for the alternate activities suggested for the park in the NVEC letter, such as bird watching and stargazing, on fields planned for team sports at Whitehall Regional Park. There are ample publicly

accessible locations for those activities located all throughout the region. We have significant unsatisfied demand in the area for more sport fields for team athletic uses, and have needed them for years.

The sport fields in Whitehall Regional Park will be used immediately and frequently by Centre Soccer's programs and by programs from other non-profit sports organizations.

About Water Quality and Planned Field Uses

Water quality is highly important to our quality of life, and regional and state officials have already had ample opportunity to review this properly at the time it was proposed.

The park is not the same impact as a residential development. These are sports fields. They are low impact, non-polluting uses with substantial community benefits, as planned. These are all considerations that the authorities, boards, and commissions that approved this project have considered already before approval. The idea that youth team sports played on either grass or artificial turf are somehow dangerous for water quality is a huge stretch.

None of the discussion opposing the park is arguing that the park is worse than its current use as a fertilized farm field. *It is highly likely the park is a less polluting use than the current farming use for the property*, and certainly less than the combined impact from all farming uses on the properties adjacent to WRP in the large tract between Whitehall Road and Route 45, which dwarf WRP.

In their letter, NVEC states that, "If artificial turf is used, apply current best practices for sourcing the materials and managing runoff." We wholeheartedly agree. The stormwater management for WRP has already been designed to the highest standards.

Artificial turf conserves billions of gallons of water by reducing the need to irrigate, and avoids the use of pesticides and fertilizers.

Not only is the artificial grass non-toxic, it is also non-allergenic, and depending on the type of artificial grass, absorbs falls more safely than natural grass. A 2004 NCAA study among schools nationwide comparing injury rates between natural and synthetic turf found that the injury rate during practice was 4.4% on natural turf, and 3.5% on synthetic turf.

Whitehall Regional Park As Planned is an Asset to the Region

We are all grateful and appreciative of the beautiful parks facilities we have here. They are important features that improve our quality of life, and are assets to the community. We live in a region that prides itself in being active. Team sports for youth and adults are very popular here, and the sport fields for these outdoor

activities on fields planned in Whitehall Regional Park are sorely needed.

Whitehall Regional Park as planned will be a major improvement for active youth and adults in soccer and other sports in our region when completed. Access and use of great park facilities are a reason to live in the Centre Region, and a reason to visit. The breathtaking setting will be an attraction to sports participation here.

There are a significant number of users that are being impacted by the delay of the completion of this project, and we appreciate the effort to move forward to complete it without further delay.

Sincerely,

Matt Vidic
President
Centre Soccer Association

Centre Soccer Board of Directors:

Matt Vidic - President
Christian Alves
Andrea Dowhower
Ron Beyer
Jason Fralick
Jeff Garrigan
Ray Marsh
Brian Mehalick
Zack Moore
Scott Wong
Carol Zeiss

