

Attachment A

September 13, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Carolyn Wainwright, Community Services Supervisor

FROM: Tanya Schmieler, Park Planning Coordinator

SUBJECT: Local Park Ballfield Permitting Policy

The issue of designating fields as permit only is one that has been debated extensively over the years. In 1993, a committee was formed to study the issue and looked into it in great detail. The problems are the same today as they were then. Before making recommendations, the Athletic Field Use Committee :1) surveyed policies of other jurisdictions, 2) conducted surveys of park use, 3) analyzed park police reports, 4) analyzed impact of unpermitted use on field conditions, 5) noted impact on users and staff of restricting field use to permit only, 6) Conducted field visits on problem fields to determine conditions and develop specific recommendations and 7) considered all citizen complaints and met with concerned citizens associations.

After all this work, and one year of study, the committee developed the recommendations shown in italics below which suggested some positive solutions to the problems:

"1993 ATHLETIC FIELD USE COMMITTEE REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS"

A. MAJOR RECOMMENDATION - THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT WE CONTINUE TO ALLOW FIELDS TO BE USED ON A FIRST COME FIRST SERVE BASIS AS INDICATED IN OUR APPROVED PERMIT POLICY FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- *We believe that parks and fields are for people, and that it is our role as a Department of Parks to make them readily available to the public as long as park regulations are adhered to.*
- *We should encourage constructive leisure time activities for our youth adults so that they are less likely to get involved with drugs, crime and vandalism.*
- *Requiring permits will make it much more difficult for people to use public fields and could cause undue hardship. Groups (formal, informal or pick-up), including community residents, would be precluded from spontaneous play on public fields. The present permit system requires payment of a fee and submission of a team roster prior to issuance of the permit. Restricting the use of fields to permit-holders only risks creation of a financial hardship for lower income individuals, school-aged children, and virtually any non-league games.*
- *The Permit office would need additional staff to handle requests and phones. The recent decision to charge fees has already created a large work load increase. As we do not currently permit adult softball practice, there would be a very large increase in permit requests. Additionally, we don't have the field availability to grant all requested permits, even now.*

- *Surveys revealed relatively few parking, litter and noise problems and noted that most groups were young adults and their families and people are out having a good time.*
- *Most other jurisdictions allow pick-up play on local fields if a permit holder is not present.*
- *Restricting fields to permit use only would not improve their condition as they will still have heavy wear and tear from permit holders.*
- *Previous attempts to restrict field usage at a specific park were not successful.*
- *Complaints have been made by a relatively small number of people.*
- *Although fields have been heavily used in some instances, few park violations have actually occurred.*

B. OTHER COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee did feel that there were some important changes that could be made to alleviate some of the current conflicts between residents and field users. These include:

- 1) *Change the way we plan for fields, and locate future athletic fields away from homes (like at Parklawn Local Park). We should develop a soccer complex and cluster fields in larger, easily accessible parks. Include adequate parking and screening at all field locations.*
- 2) *Recruit a part-time multi-lingual employee/volunteer to work with non-English speaking teams to improve understanding of park regulations.*
- 3) *Modify existing fields where possible to provide additional landscaping, etc.*
- 4) *Improve parking where feasible at existing sites.*
- 5) *Install signs with park rules in English, Spanish and/or other languages. Provide a (menu selected) telephone number for recorded explanations in multiple languages.*
- 6) *Have ballfield permits include requirement for trash pick-up.*
- 7) *Implement solutions 2-5 of the Park Police Study, and all recommendations on public relations and enforcement of park rules and regulations*
- 8) *Encourage neighborhood groups to obtain and utilize ballfield permits to facilitate community use.*

C. CONCLUDING NOTE

The committee strongly feels that a public/community forum should be held as a prelude to any significant changes in the present permit policy and signage guidelines, and particularly if a mandatory permit requirement is envisioned. Participation from all user groups and community groups should be solicited to ensure representation of the broadest scope of users."

There are approximately 130 local parks and problems occur at relatively few of them. With the ever increasing numbers of immigrants and minorities in Montgomery County, it is very important to look at positive solutions to our problems and ways to provide the recreation that this population needs. Downcounty soccer fields are at a premium and there are no other places for these groups to go. One possible consideration is to restrict a few local park fields to permit only in order to maintain some higher quality fields, while leaving other fields open for informal play. In the downcounty area where we have severe field shortages, however, restricting use may be a real problem.



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK POLICE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DIVISION
12751 LAYHILL ROAD
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20906

(301) 949-8010



April 15, 1993

TO: Mr. Don Cochran
Director, Montgomery County Parks Department

VIA: Commander Donald Deering
Chief, Park Police Division

Lt. Ray Foxwell
Region II Commander

FROM: A/Sergeant Jake Bise
Supervisor Community Services

SUBJECT: Approval of Soccer Field Recommendations.

The attached Assignment Plan contains recommendations to reduce the number of citizens complaints generated from adult soccer games played at certain down county Parks. Several of the recommendations require your approval.

1. The establishment of a Park Use Permit requirement for Sligo Creek Soccer Field (across from Sligo Club) and Lynnbrook Local Park. This permit would be for adult team sports. The permit fee should be assessed on the ability to pay.
2. Posting of informational signs at these parks alerting the public about the Permit Requirement. These signs should be in english and spanish.

Implementing the attached action plan along with the above mentioned recommendations need to be addressed as soon as possible. This would allow us to effectively manage this situation through the season.

Background:

The popularity of soccer in Montgomery County has increased dramatically over the past decade and as a result certain Montgomery County Parks have received increased use by players of this sport. A negative aspect of this increased use has been the impact on certain neighborhoods that surround these parks resulting in an increase in complaints from residents. The Park Police as well as the Parks Department have received complaints ranging from violations of the Park Rules and Regulations to nuisance types of complaints.

Soccer is a very competitive team sport and as such the noise generated by players and spectators can be quite loud and bothersome to nearby neighborhoods. Few of the parks provide adequate parking for the number of spectators and players. In most cases the soccer players keep the field for most of the day restricting the use for other types of recreational activities.

The following are the commonly received complaints.

- Alcohol violations
- Littering
- Noise
- Indecent conduct (Urinating in public)
- Parking problems
- Turf damage

Most of these complaints result from the nonformal league play or pick-up games played at the following parks.

1. Sligo Creek Pkwy across from the Golf Course.
2. Lynnbrook Local Park.
3. Pleasant View Local Park.
4. Ray's Meadow.

The following parks generate the majority of the soccer field complaints. A large number of players and spectators at these locations are Latino and depending on the length of time that some of these individuals have been in this country it is reasonable to assume that a number of these persons are not familiar with the Park Rules and Regulations.

Sligo Creek Pkwy.

The community that borders this park formed the Allied Civic Group Inc. and drafted a resolution on the Sligo Creek Park Soccer Fields which was voted on and passed by the members. This resolution spelled out their recommendations for addressing the problems and was presented to the Park and Planning Commission. (See Attached) Sligo Creek Soccer Fields are very heavily used for soccer. Parking is inadequate and creates a traffic hazard due to vehicles parking along side of Sligo Creek Pkwy.

Portable toilets have been installed at this location which help to solve the urinating in public problem. Littering and alcohol violations are the most common complaint at this park.

Lynnbrook Local Park.

Lynnbrook Local Park is surrounded by houses which are very close to the park and are very susceptible to the activities taking place there. The citizens surrounding this park have made numerous complaints about the soccer games. An unsuccessful attempt was made through the use of signs to regulate play by limiting the number of players allowed on the field to ten. This solution proved to be impractical due to enforcement problems. Parking for this park is along the neighborhood streets and most of the soccer players do not come from the immediate neighborhood.

Recommended Solutions:

Permit Requirements:

1. A Park Use Permit should be required for use of the Sligo Creek Soccer Field and Lynnbrook Local Park for adult team play activities such as soccer, football, softball or baseball. These sports are by nature noisy and receive a large number of spectators. The permit requirement would allow the Parks Department to regulate the amount of play and the time of use for these parks. Controlling the amount of team use and the times used will allow for other recreational activities by the neighborhood or other users and reduce the negative impact on the surrounding community. Careful attention should be given to the hours that these games are scheduled.
2. Signs alerting the public of the permit requirements should be adequately posted at these parks in both English and Spanish.
3. When a permit is issued a copy of the park rules and regulations should be given to the permit holder, these rules and regulations should also be in English and Spanish. The permit holder should be held accountable for damages or incidents arising from their use of the park.
4. The permit office should keep records of complaints about a particular permitted use in the event that problems do arise, action can be taken to refuse future permits to the individual or group.

5. Information should be made available which would give other park locations that do not require permits for pick-up type team play. This information should be available from the Park Police and Parks Department's permit office as well as at other park facilities. Alternate locations should be selected by input from the Park Police Primary Beat Officer and Parks Department Region Staff after careful consideration to location and suitability.

Public Relations Recommendations: Park Police and Parks Department.

1. Media resources by the Park Police and Parks Department should be used to educate the public about the permit requirements and problems encountered. Information should be provided for alternate parks that do not require permits for team play. Information about the Park Rules and Regulations should also be provided.

2. The Latino media resources have been very cooperative in the past and will assist in providing the Nonenglish speaking Latino community with information. The Park Police Media Relations Officer should coordinate with the various Latino media to address this community. Resources available include radio, news print, and television.

3. The soccer leagues should also be made aware of the problems encountered and the rules and regulations governing park use. Lt. Foxwell at a recent soccer league meeting provided information to the representatives of a number of area soccer leagues regarding this topic.

4. Beat Officers should make contact with teams at the identified problem locations to inform the teams of the park rules and regulations and solicit their cooperation. The Officers should establish a contact person within each group to assist in gaining cooperation from other members. The officers should contact these teams starting as early as possible at the beginning of spring. Non spanish speaking officers should team up with spanish speaking Park Police personnel such as with Park Police Dispatcher, Mr. Juan Rodriguez to inform the Nonenglish speaking Latino players of the rules and regulations and solicit their cooperation. Information should be provided which would direct these players to other park locations which do not require a permit. Locations of alternative parks should be determined by the beat officers who are familiar with the parks in the area

Enforcement of the Park Rules and Regulations:

1. Initial enforcement of Permit violations should be by Warnings. (Early part of the season)
2. Strict enforcement of the Alcohol, Littering and Indecent Conduct violations should be used.

Volunteer Program:

Each soccer league will be required to provide two volunteers to assist at the games who would be an identifiable representative of the team. The volunteers would help to inform the spectators and players about the park rules and regulations and help prohibit alcohol and drug abuse. The Park Police will be responsible for coordinating the volunteer program.

Summary:

The permit requirement for Sligo Creek and Lynnbrook Local Park will not by itself immediately solve the problems. Gaining cooperation and support from the players, spectators and community will be the key. It is important that the Park Police and the Parks Department convey to the soccer players the reasons for this requirement and to provide locations that are more suitable for this type of sport.



June 28, 2004

FROM: Home Owners of Wayne Avenue and the Mansfield Community

TO: HONORABLE DOUGLAS M. DUNCAN
 COUNTY EXECUTIVE
 51 MONROE STREET 2nd FLOOR
 ROCKVILLE, MD 20850

RE: Silver Spring International Middle School Ball Field

RECEIVED

JUL 23 2004

SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS

Dear Mr. Duncan:

Due to the indiscriminate use of the "Silver Spring International Middle School Ball Field," it has come to our attention that soccer practices are permitted with or without permits inside of the ball field; however, most appear to be non residents of Montgomery County as seen by the tags on the cars. We have observed that there is no restriction or control of this field and have been neglected by the jurisdictions in charge.

The Home owners of Wayne Avenue and the Mansfield community have discovered that the SSIMS Ball Field located at 313 Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910 is under the following jurisdictions: **The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Park Police and Third District Police.** We have called all to report inappropriate behaviors on this field. However, our numerous requests for supervision, upkeep & control of this field have been ignored to the point that now it is out of control.

Our community is in jeopardy because M-NCPPC failed to follow rules and regulations as they are stated for use of park facilities including all ball fields. Our main concern as home owners and tax payers of this community is that our families and small children are being exposed to inappropriate behavior such as **CHANGING CLOTHES, URINATING BEHIND CARS & SHADES** in public area, **LITTERING/TRASH, BEER, SELLING OF FOOD & BEVERAGES.** (Some of it takes place on the parking lot.)

Therefore, we as home owners are kindly requesting that Silver Spring International Middle School Ball Field not be used or rented for public soccer due to negligence, bad influence on our children as well as to the students of SSIMS. Also, the school gym is rented out by the school for multiple events on the same day to different organizations for basketball, volleyball, festivities and other activities. This is a residential area; there are no parking spaces, because these events attract twice as many people and cars. Therefore, we are left with a lot of cars everywhere including at bus stops. In addition, half of our driveways are blocked. We have no place to park our own cars, or for our guests.

WE THE UNDERSIGNED AGREE WITH THE CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER. WE ARE ALL HOME OWNERS AFFECTED BY THE ACTIONS OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT RESIDENTS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER
<i>[Signature]</i>	302 Mansfield Rd Silver Spring, Md	301 588 2411
<i>[Signature]</i>	302 Mansfield Silver Spring, Md	" "
<i>[Signature]</i>	306 Mansfield Rd - Silver Spring MD	301-588-4414
<i>[Signature]</i>	306 Mansfield Rd. Silver Spring, MD	" "
<i>[Signature]</i>	406 Mansfield Rd Silver Spring MD 20910	301 589 2872
<i>[Signature]</i>	406 Mansfield Rd S. I. Spg, MD 20910	301-589-2872
GEORGE CONDON	403 MANSFIELD	301-088-0930
<i>[Signature]</i>	307 Mansfield Rd	301 588 8112
<i>[Signature]</i>	303, Mansfield	301 589 0910
Mr OSTROW	304, MANSFIELD	301 585-8372

WE THE UNDERSIGNED AGREE WITH THE CONTENTS OF THIS LETTER. WE ARE ALL HOME OWNERS AFFECTED BY THE ACTIONS OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT RESIDENTS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

NAME ADDRESS PHONE NUMBER

Yolanda Klovnick *301-Mansfield Rd*
tel: 301-588 3326

[Signature] *302 WAYNE AV.* *PHONO: 301-585-7310*

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