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*County Executive*

## Montgomery County Recreation

Gabe Albornoz  
*Director*

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Montgomery County Planning Board  
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor  
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Chair Harris and Members of the Planning Board,

Montgomery County Recreation (MCR) appreciates the longstanding collaboration with Montgomery Parks to provide high-quality programming for residents. MCR recognizes the challenges faced by Parks to update the Athletic Field Use Policy and acknowledge that the proposed framework reflects a careful and deliberate effort to address long-standing challenges in athletic field scheduling while promoting fairness, clarity, and broad community benefit.

Montgomery Parks is tasked with managing an increasingly strained system, defined by high demand, limited field capacity, and a wide range of users. These fields are critical to our collective mission to provide public access to high quality recreation and parks programs. Together, we serve children and adults through organized leagues, informal groups, and community-based programs across the county. By clearly defining priorities and standardizing the permitting process, the draft policy helps reduce uncertainty, minimize conflict, and expand access in a manner that is more consistent and equitable across neighborhoods and user groups.

The proposal stands out for several key reasons. It strengthens transparency in how permits are allocated, balancing the needs of youth sports, adult recreation, and special community uses, and acknowledges the operational realities of field wear, rest, and maintenance. In doing so, it supports both fair access today and the long-term sustainability of these shared public assets.

MCR respectfully encourages the Planning Board to review particular components of the draft Athletic Field Permit Use Policy. We offer the following considerations to strengthen implementation and interagency coordination:

### **1. County Government Priority and Partnership**

As a sister agency, Montgomery County Recreation (MCR) recommends acknowledgement within the policy as a priority internal government partner as done during the processes to develop the Vision 2030 and PROS plans. MCR's year-round access to athletic fields is vital to meeting County government obligations and community expectations for public programming. MCR suggests that the policy clearly state and consistently apply this priority status, allowing flexibility to request additional dates when necessary to meet public demand and ensure program continuity.

**Office of the Director**

## **2. Alignment with Recreation Program Timelines**

Several permitting dates, including Priority Use deadlines, Go-Live events, and seasonal start and end dates, do not align with our shared Recreation and Parks' registration and schedule building process. The timeline as drafted will affect our ability to plan leagues, allocate teams, and manage public registration. We recommend aligning these timelines or establishing an internal exception process for County programs.

## **3. Rosters, Privacy, and Data Sharing**

Recreation collects and manages participant data through the shared VSI system with Parks, ensuring compliance with privacy requirements. County programs should therefore be exempt from additional roster submission requirements because Parks has full access to recreation programs and data.

## **4. Cancellations, Change Requests, and Fees**

The proposed 25 percent cancellation or change fee and short adjustment deadlines could significantly impact County programs, which often need to adapt schedules due to participant needs, weather, or school-based constraints. We recommend waiving or reducing fees for County programs and allowing greater flexibility for internal adjustments. It is important to note that this change would result in a correlated budget request.

## **5. Pilot Programs and Alternative Use**

Pilot programs or special use initiatives should not limit Recreation's access to fields or disrupt ongoing community-based programs providing public access to affordable recreation. Continued collaboration and coordination with Recreation is essential to ensure alignment with existing schedules and public commitments.

## **6. Conditions of Use and Enforcement**

Recreation supports the intent to reduce "ghost permitting" and recommends clearer guidance on monitoring and reporting procedures to ensure penalties are not applied for legitimate last-minute team or weather-related cancellations.

Approval of this policy, incorporating the recommended considerations, would provide essential guidance to Parks and Recreation staff and field users, reinforce responsible stewardship of county resources, and help ensure that Montgomery County residents continue to enjoy safe, vibrant, and inclusive recreational opportunities. We look forward to continued collaboration in managing resources and delivering high-quality, customer-focused recreation programs and services.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing commitment to equitable and sustainable recreational access throughout Montgomery County. Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss these points. Thank you!

Sincerely,

*Gabe Albornoz*

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Director, Montgomery County Recreation