



Meeting Minutes

Turf Advisory Committee Meeting #1

December 17, 2015 2:30-4:00pm

Members Present:

Baker, Greg	Kish, David
Benner, Steve	Knutson, Nick
Brown, Patrick	Larson, Chad
Burke, Jeff	Lawyer, Curtis
Cowan, Ron	McAtee, Molly
Denton, Julie	Pitton, Amber
Everett, James	Read, Matthew
Flint, Ted	Ryan, Kevin
Harding, Bob	Stinson, Jonah
Hatch, Greg	Swanson, William
Hodge, Gary	Vaughn, Jeff
Hust, Lisa	Weeda, Brian
Keeley, Brian	

Members Absent:

Clarke, Steve
Cushman, Colin
Reilly, Kay

Ron Cowan, Executive Director of Capital Projects and school facilities, welcomed the committee members to the meeting. He shared the Bellingham Promise stating our work reflects this vision, encouraging children to discover and develop a passion, inspiring healthy active individuals, and respecting and caring for our children.

Ron introduced Dr. Baker, commenting he is the driving force behind the Bellingham Promise and the 2013 bond projects. Dr. Baker thanked the committee for volunteering their time, especially the student members bringing their voice to the group. He requested that each committee member introduce themselves and share why they chose to participate.

Dr. Baker stated we bring groups together when we have projects with complexities. He added we've brought together a great diverse team, and that each member of this team was selected for a reason. He asked that everyone speak their opinion, as well as take a step back from specific feelings to see the big picture. He encouraged the group to listen to everyone's perspectives and to help each other by making sure everyone is heard, in particular the two students that are on the committee, reaching out to include their perspective.

District wide the advisory group is going to make recommendations about the type of turf and infill material that will be implemented across the district. Dr. Baker acknowledged that some health concerns about the type of infill material have been expressed and he would like the committee to look into this issue.

Dr. Baker concluded by introducing Ron and Steve Clarke leading as co-chairs for the group, and he is excited to see the recommendations that come forward.

Ron Cowan then shared the following suggested group norms that will guide how the committee works together. He briefly discussed each and asked if anyone had any suggested changes or additions.

- a. Be Present and Attentive
- b. Assume Positive Intent – share our perspective but in a positive way.
- c. Include all voices/Opportunity to be heard-Especially the students.
- d. Others?

The committee agreed with the norms as presented.

Ron then reviewed the Committee Template, explaining a lot of time was spent on writing the template, so it is clear why everyone is here. The committee will provide information to the superintendent pertaining to fields including lighting, markings, design elements, type of turf and infill. We will receive information from Dr. Greg Stern from the Whatcom County Health Department regarding the health aspects related to infill concerns, we'll gather information from community members, and there will be a project open house to see if our initial ideas need to be adjusted.

Ron reminded the group, that we are an advisory to the superintendent. We will make our recommendation, but Dr. Baker makes the final decision.

The total project budget for both Bellingham and Squalicum fields is 5 million dollars, including permits, survey, engineering, design, construction, materials and sales tax. There are existing site constraints so we know where we are doing the work, and we are not relocating either field. We are developing a design standard for turf and infill which Sehome will benefit from as well when turf fields are installed as part of the Sehome project.

An outline of committee activities and a timeline was handed out. At the next meeting on January 6th, we will decide where we will tour different fields during our January 20th meeting. At our February 3rd meeting we will talk about what we learned from the tour and will have discussion on the type of turf and infill we would like to recommend. There will be an evening meeting where we will share our initial ideas with the community. The goal is to have a recommendation for Dr. Baker by the end of February.

Ron introduced Bob Harding and Jeff Burke from DA Hogan. DA Hogan is a premier firm in turf field design both state wide and nationally. Bob is a principal landscape architect. DA Hogan has done work locally at WWU, our Parks and Recreation facilities and Civic Field. Bob explained they are design consultants and have no affiliation with any turf or infill companies. They work for the owner and are independent from that standpoint. DA Hogan has completed a large number of projects including numerous public school fields, work at Century Link, Seahawk training facilities, the new UW running track, WSU natural turf field, Boise St., University of Oregon, Rec fields at Oregon State, the Green Bay Packers, etc.

At Bellingham High School the field is south of the tennis courts, with Options to the east. The field is the current existing grass soccer field. The grass field will be reconstructed to a synthetic field, making it as large as the space will allow working within the existing footprint. Currently, we are looking at it as a soccer field. There are other field markings to consider in addition to soccer, including practice football (not competition), and men's and women's lacrosse. There needs to be some grading on the field, and will include bleacher seating, a pedestrian pathway, lighting, and if possible, an additional tennis court. There is an oil tank under the area where the tennis court would be placed which may limit this option, but it is being considered.

The length of the site that's available doesn't allow a full sized football field, as there is not enough room to run out at the end of the end zone which is an unsafe condition and does not comply with National Federation of High Schools (NFHS) guidelines. In order to use it as a football field, 15' needs to be added to each end zone. The challenge is on the east side where there is an alley and an easement with the city. Ron Cowan is looking at options that would allow us to put in a full size football field.

Public restrooms are not part of the project, but may be something to look at.

Phase 2 of the Bellingham High project would be to make all of the remaining area, which is currently the baseball, softball and football fields, synthetic and include a non-regulation track. Ron added that Phase 2 was discussed by the bond Task Force, but is not part of this project, and will likely be considered in a future bond.

Jeff Burke then spoke of the Squalicum project. Jeff has been involved with most of the projects in Bellingham, most recently Civic Field, Squalicum Park and WWU. He stated one focus is on the track and field area, including resurfacing the track with a rubberized surface, dual long jump and triple jump runways, and include pole vault, shot put and discus areas. The existing field is too narrow for lacrosse and soccer so they would like to widen the field foot print to expand the opportunity of field use. Additionally, they would like to tuck in some bleachers along the hillside for spectator seating, improve pedestrian access and add some crowd control fencing for track events.

Lighting with a 4 pole system to improve extended use on the field is an option that will be a task for the design team to overcome as we work to get power up to the site.

Jeff reiterated that they are working for us, and giving us all of the options that are possible. Then we will come up with the recommendation. He encouraged the committee to ask questions. He also reminded the group that they are not representing any of the companies that sell or install fields.

Phase 2 of the Squalicum project is looking at synthetic turf for the baseball field, soccer fields and softball fields. Currently, there is no place for javelin. In many instances, athletes use a javelin with a rubber tip. A javelin runway could be added at multiple locations.

Restrooms were brought up again and the shape of the track was questioned. Currently the plan is to only resurface the existing track and not change the shape.

A handout was shared with information on synthetic turf and how it has evolved since 1960. Monsanto came out with the first synthetic turf, with it first being installed at the Astrodome.

Through the 60 and 70s short pile nylon was used, eventually with an impact resistance pad. It had to be durable so it was nylon that was very abrasive. There were many injuries, as the fiber became directional over time, although in general it was a good solution.

In the 80's and 90's companies started using an infill system with an elastic layer pad and a sand fill. It was quite durable but still an abrasive surface. Towards the end of the 90's the newest version of synthetic turf emerged, which is an infill turf. It is much like residential carpet with a backing. The other component is the infill system, which includes a variety of different infill materials dropped in so that fibers are standing vertical and do not become directional.

Below the field is a drainage system comprised of aggregate sand and gravel. There has been a lot of talk about the health issues related to infill material, predominately ground up rubber tires. There is current renewed emphasis about whether infill rubber from ground up tires is safe to play on. We will discuss this issue at other meetings which will include staff from the Whatcom County Health Department. Other materials are available, all with different properties and different price points.

Ron Cowan concluded the meeting stating that at our next meeting there would be more discussion about infill materials. Dr.Greg Stern, Health Officer from the Whatcom County Health Department will be in attendance to share information related to infill materials.

A homework handout was shared with a number of relevant studies to look at prior to the next meeting. Ron requested the committee members send questions they may have for Greg Stern prior to the meeting to him, and he will forward those to Greg.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 6, 2016, 2:45-4:45 at Squalicum High School, Room A227.

Meeting adjourned: 4:00p.m.