

MINUTES
AVON HIGH SCHOOL SYNTHETIC FIELD PROJECT SUBCOMMITTEE
AVON ROOM TOWN HALL BLDG. 1
June 13, 2016

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 AM by Chairman Peter Ponziani in the Avon Room, Town Hall Building 1. Subcommittee members present: Chairman Peter Ponziani, David Jadovich, Todd Donovan, Sara Roberson, Dan Neagle and alternate member Kelly Jackson. Staff members present: Town Manager Brandon Robertson, Assistant to the Town Manager Grace Tiezzi, High School Coordinator of Athletics and Student Activities Timothy Filon, Director of Operations Myles Altimus and Recreation & Parks Director Ruth Checko. BSC Group's representative present: Manager of Landscape Architecture Eric Roise.

II. MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING – May 23, 2016

VOTE: Mr. Jadovich motioned to accept the May 23, 2016 minutes as presented and Mr. Donovan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. FIELD RENOVATIONS PROGRAMMING DISCUSSION

Mr. Ponziani noted that this was the fourth meeting of the Avon High School Synthetic Field Project Subcommittee and that the focus would be buffering and field use. He turned the discussion over to Mr. Roise.

Mr. Roise began by recapping the previous discussions which were about materials. This meeting, I'm going to talk about bleachers, lighting, sketches, layout options, budget and schedule. Before we get into that, I want to ask about any field trips you may have taken. Are there any questions about that or about my presentation last time? There were none, so he moved on.

First I'd like to talk about bleachers. There's two basic types – angle frame and structural I-beam. The difference is that with the structural bleacher, there's room underneath for walkways and storage. If there are constraints width wise, instead of having to put a walkway in back of the bleachers, you can put it under the bleachers. That saves you some space.

Some other options to think about with bleachers is priority seating and how the front deck works on the bleachers. Most are 40" above grade for the front deck. You have to get up there by stairs or a ramp. The first row of seats will be above the level of the coaches and players standing on the sidelines.

Another thing to think about is access – fire code access. You have to have a certain width of stairs for either getting off the side of the bleachers or the center of the bleachers. When the

bleachers start getting long and narrow, you start having to put in vomitoria – these are stairs that exit out the back of the bleachers.

The other type of bleacher is the angle frame (East Lyme) – no space for anything underneath. It's built on a pad – concrete pad that's been leveled off.

Another thing to think about with either design of bleachers is skirting. Skirting is the panel system in front that hides the structure of the bleacher. It also eliminates the need to put a fence safety wise for people on the track. These types can be put up right against the lane line.

Some other things to think about are colors – decking and structure. Branding – banners on fence or press box. In, Connecticut the size of press box can eliminate the need for providing a lift.

Another thing to think about with structural bleachers, is that people will hang out underneath. Lighting is very important.

An audience member asked if there is skirting on the backside, the side that faces West Avon Road. Mr. Roise answered that typically the skirting is only done on the front side, but it can be put on the backside.

Ms. Roberson asked if the lights were on poles or mounted under the bleachers and Mr. Roise answered that they are mounted underneath.

Mr. Donovan added that he didn't think we were looking at anything elaborate. He thinks we're looking at the angled bleachers.

Mr. Ponziani added that there has to be a significant cost difference. To which Mr. Roise responded, there's a 15% – 20% cost difference.

Mr. Neagle added that with the structural bleachers, you have a walkway underneath to get you from one side to the other. With the angled bleachers, you'd have to use the walkway in front of the bleachers. The structural bleachers are on concrete piers and the angled bleachers are installed on a concrete slab, which is cheaper.

Mr. Ponziani asked if there were any more questions before we moved on. There were none.

Mr. Roise continued with lighting. Sports lighting technology within the last ten years is much more focused and efficient. Much less spillage of light. The evolution of light has come along from a totally open light fixture that spills everywhere to an aimed system. The systems are so highly aimed and the lenses are so engineered, that you're using a lot less light and the light is going on the field. It's much more efficient. The facets are engineered to aim specifically to the field and the shields are there so you cannot see the lights from certain angles.

Typically has a facility such as yours will have a 70 ft. – 80 ft. pole with about 14 light fixtures on top. The higher the light, the more control you have. The newest technology uses a lot less energy, a lot less spillage on the rest of the neighborhood.

Typical lighting plan – 3 different light levels that we’ve designed for. One is for large ball play (lesser light level), small ball play (higher level) and filming (higher level). The taller the pole, the more focused you can be with the lighting. Short poles mean lots of glare.

Example of old fixtures versus new fixtures. With the new lights, light is focused on the field and its dark around the perimeter. You need to provide pedestrian lighting.

With LED fixtures, the lamp has a better life cycle, 10 year warranty. Energy savings is a feel good option. Cost is more expensive, warranty on the fixtures is shorter.

The cost for a typical 4 pole system is \$350,000. This includes poles, fixtures, installation, and controls.

Musco lights – most popular, best quality. No competition.

Cost of pedestrian lights is \$50,000 - \$70,000 – egress.

Field layout options. I’m going to talk about 3 options. Option A is the track and preserving the existing bleachers. It’s a narrow track. The other options I’m providing because I wasn’t part of the initial discussions. These options address some deficiencies that I’ll discuss.

Mr. Roise distributed sketches. Sketch A is a narrow 8 lane track. The existing bleachers remain. The existing field remains – 195’ width soccer field with a less than 10 foot run out, walkways to get in and out, room enough for 750 bleachers on the East side. There are two deficiencies – run out is less than 10 feet. Recommended runout for soccer is 10 feet before you hit a different surface. The distance between the outer lane and the fence that surrounds the track is recommended to be 1 meter/39”. In this sketch, it’s 18”. 195’ soccer field is less than recommended width for a high school soccer field and women’s lacrosse field.

Mr. Donovan interjected that we ironed out all those details. We were designing it to meet all the regulations for high school athletics, all sports. If you’re saying that this design is not up to spec, I don’t think it’s correct. Mr. Ponziani agreed.

Mr. Roise added that the 195’ width is within the NFHS guidelines, not the recommended size. They recommend a 210’ width.

The bleachers should be moved to roadside. It should be 750. This will give us the width that we need.

Field hockey field is the same as what you have.

Mr. Neagle asked about the wall against the track – that paved walkway is elevated. How high is that wall? Mr. Roise replied it’s about 4’ high. It’s about 30” out from the outside lane.

Ms. Roberson asked about the scoreboards. She wanted to know how close they are to the abutting properties. Mr. Roise answered probably 50'.

Mr. Roise moved on to Concept B. This widens out the field to allow for 10' runout on both sides of the field. It also gives you the 30' around the perimeter. The one thing we are wondering about is a formal entry. Right now, there's a walkover to the west and entry to the east. No formalized entry. This kind of gets you there, by centralizing that entry.

Mr. Donovan added that when we designed this 3 plus years ago, there was never a built up wall. All of the needs were met for all sports. That's the design that we went back to the Town with. There was handicapped access to the baseball fields. There was never a need for another retaining wall.

Shot put and field events were still the same. They weren't moved.

Mr. Roise commented that the current design is not within NFHS guidelines for width. It meets the minimums, but it's not recommended.

Mr. Jadovich asked if we do away with the visitor's bleachers and add them to the other side, will that give us enough room. Mr. Roise responded yes.

Mr. Jadovich added let's get rid of the bleachers. Visitors and home team can be together. We can have some savings and upgrade the bleachers. Let's do it right.

Ms. Jackson added that in South Windsor, the bleachers are on the same side, separated by the press box in the middle. It looked great.

Our original plan was for a 1,000 person bleachers on the roadside. We also have to deal with a hill. It's not flat behind the bleachers leading up the road. We'd have to excavate to put any walkway behind there. Mr. Neagle added that structurally you could use concrete piers. Mr. Roise added that to get the piers under and have access, you'd have to excavate.

Mr. Ponziani asked about the emergency exit. It's been removed.

Mr. Donovan added that our recommendation was not to reinvent the wheel with regards to accesses and egresses. This plan would not work. We would keep the pole vault where it is on the other side. Move the bleachers to the roadside.

Mr. Ponziani asked what the differences between layouts B and C was. Mr. Roise said the home bleachers and the runway on the other side.

Mr. Filon asked about discus. Mr. Roise said discus can be on the turf.

Mr. Roise stated that we need to go back and redesign.

Mr. Neagle asked about turf material in the end zones. Is it more or less expensive to use turf? Mr. Roise said it's less expensive to use turf in the D-zones. It gives the athletes a place to warm up and stretch.

Ms. Jackson had a question on the length of the field hockey field. Is this the recommended length? Is it within the guidelines? Mr. Roise answered that it's within the recommended length, it's a little short. Ms. Jackson agreed that it's short. We've had some complaints from other teams. On the side closest to the fire house, is there room to make it the recommended size? Mr. Roise answered that the field is heavily constrained because of the wall. The main issue is utilities. Mr. Donovan added that they've maximized the field in its current space. We had to go through zoning.

Mr. Ponziani asked what we want done on Layout A. Mr. Donovan answered that we should go back to the plan that moves the bleachers all to one side. Mr. Roise added moving the bleachers to one side, getting the 10' feet of run out, getting 39" space between the outer lane line and the fence.

Mr. Roise asked if we wanted to redo the bleachers. Mr. Donovan answered that we wanted to replace the bleachers. Mr. Neagle added that two of them were non-conforming. Ms. Jackson added that we discussed the two nicer bleachers in the center to be moved to the field hockey field to replace those. Mr. Donovan responded that there were plans on utilizing them somewhere. Mr. Neagle added that he'd list them as an alternate, replacing the bleachers.

Mr. Ponziani added that we've got significant cost considerations here. We need to view the costs for different alternatives. When we get ready to make a recommendation, we can do so with the various alternatives. It's up to Town Council to make the decision.

Mr. Roise moved on to costs. This estimate that was done a year ago. This estimate went to Town Council. This estimate includes soft costs as well as construction costs. He's reviewed them and they're still valid today. When I do our next iteration of Concept A, I'll update this.

Ms. Jackson asked about secondary field lighting. Mr. Roise answered those are options. Ms. Roberson asked if it was \$350,000 to light the field hockey field and Mr. Roise answered yes. It's a separate set of controls.

Mr. Neagle added that this whole cost estimate could be manipulated ten different ways. Mr. Roise answered that's the idea. Give us a menu of costs and options so we can get into the details of what you want. Mr. Neagle asked if that was us or Town Council. Mr. Ponziani responded that we make a recommendation, ultimately it's up to Town Council. If we come up with options, they can pick and choose.

Mr. Robertson stated come up with options. Keep in mind, the charge from the Council the space is a multipurpose turf field, lighting and track.

Mr. Donovan added the bleachers, press box and secondary field are options. Mr. Neagle added that he thinks the secondary field is more important than the other things. Ms. Jackson added that

the secondary field is a shorter turf field. That would be less expensive, correct? Mr. Roise agreed, but not by much.

Ms. Jackson added that the field hockey field would be a revenue stream for the town with Youth Lacrosse and Flag Football. Ms. Checko corrected that we don't rent out the field hockey field. We let Youth Lacrosse and Flag Football use it.

Mr. Robertson stated that Town Council will be focused on the project cost. The synthetic turf field whether it's multipurpose plus the field hockey field or just the multipurpose field. From the Council's perspective, it doesn't solve the overall lack of athletic field space in town. We're probably still going to forward with an expansion of Fisher Meadows. You're on task with working on this project specifically, but we should look at it from a broader perspective as well. Town Council will be looking at this project plus more regular turf fields.

Mr. Ponziani asked about the \$1.5 million Mr. Robertson referred to at the last meeting. Mr. Robertson responded that \$1.5 million is for recreation athletic fields and facilities total.

Ms. Roberson asked if she could sum up what she's hearing. This is a part of the process. Down the road, we're going to be expanding into other fields as well – Fisher Meadows, Thompson Road, Buckingham, etc. Here is the start, there are still options for other fields. Mr. Robertson agreed. It doesn't solve the problem of shortage of practice and playing fields.

Mr. Roise added that turf fields get twice the use of natural fields. You are taking some pressure off of Fisher Meadows.

Ms. Roberson asked about escrow? Mr. Donovan answered that we were not tasked with that. Mr. Robertson added that prior to this going to Town Council, he'd have a conversation with Mr. Roise regarding setting aside funds for when it comes time for replacing the turf.

Mr. Roise moved on to schedule. He gave a draft schedule based on a summer construction period, next summer. Starting construction June 15th and finishing construction in the fall 2017. Ms. Jackson asked about discussions surrounding a March start date. Mr. Roise answered that he didn't get direction one way or another. Ms. Jackson stated that we discussed alternate sites for graduation. Mr. Filon added that to move football offsite is going to break the budget. Ms. Jackson added that we had talked about moving spring sports and starting construction in March.

Mr. Roise continued with buffering. The big issues are the bleachers along the street and the buffer along the neighborhood properties. Right now it's pretty dense vegetation. Ms. Roberson interjected that it's not. From October through May, it's completely see through. 90 trees died and had to be removed.

Mr. Roise continued as far as lighting is concerned, the lighting will be focused on the field itself. The lighting will be better than most people expect. Any fence that's put down along the property lines, will have to be really tall to be effective. Sound buffering – small speakers around the bleachers versus large speakers.

Mr. Neagle added that buffering is a concern amongst his neighbors on West Avon Road with fields being lit and increased use – sound transmission and light. Mr. Roise added that vegetation is not an effective buffer. The way to buffer sound is to change the sound system – more small speakers, closer to the spectators.

Mr. Ponziani summed up that we're dealing with sound, visibility and light. Mr. Roise added that another factor will be increased usage and traffic.

Mr. Ponziani asked what we have now for sound. Mr. Donovan replied that we have 5 or 6 speakers that blast all over the field. If we move the bleachers to one side of the field, that will help with directional sound. Mr. Neagle added that the system is horrible. It gets loud.

Mr. Roise stated that more smaller speakers will focus the sound. Ms. Roberson asked if they would be at bleacher level. Mr. Roise responded they're on poles in the back of the bleachers.

Mr. Ponziani said that we've pretty much covered lighting. How about visibility?

Mr. Roise answered that visibility you have from West Avon Road. Buffering on the side would require a significant amount of landscaping or an opaque fence.

Along the south side line, putting in a fence is not going to be effective unless you go 15 feet high.

An audience member asked how we restrict access from people coming in. Mr. Donovan replied that there's a fence there currently that we'd keep in place. Potentially add more landscaping.

Ms. Roberson asked about the lighting and controlling the timing. Mr. Roise responded that there are different ways of controlling the lighting. You can have it on a clock, you can have it on a clock with a button, or per event. You can control it with a phone.

Mr. Ponziani asked regarding the Sudbury Road properties, how do we keep traffic? Ms. Roberson added that there's kids come through. They go in the back.

Mr. Donovan asked if we have to look at buffering more along the property line. Is that part of this project? Mr. Robertson answered that the way we might want to approach that is to go Planning and Zoning on an informational basis – prior to the Referendum, prior to going to Town Council. Keeping in mind that whatever we do, will increase the cost of the project. Mr. Donovan added that it may not be part of this project. It may be a different bucket of money used to buffer the whole property, not just the field area. Mr. Robertson added that we want to look at it as a total project cost. If we don't include that in the bond authorization, it would have to go into Capital. There's going to be a lot of stress on the capital budget.

Ms. Roberson added that the street on the other side, behind the practice field, Foxcroft. We should keep that in mind as well. I have pictures over different times of the year, I'd be happy to share with you.

Mr. Ponziani asked what this committee wants to have Mr. Roise do regarding buffering. Mr. Donovan answered that he thought recommendations as far out as the old baseball scoreboard. Ms. Roberson added that that's a great start, but we have to be mindful of all the properties. If we only go so far, the kids are going to go farther down. Let's do it right the first time. Mr. Donovan asked if it's an option to buffer the whole Sudbury side. Ms. Roberson feels that that's reasonable.

Mr. Ponziani asked if the main field is going to be fenced. Mr. Roise answered that there will be a fence around the track and a taller fence around most of it for the spectators. We'll have to complete it if we want to ticket. Mr. Neagle asked if a berm is an option. Ms. Checko answered that she and Mr. Roise should get together with the Town Planner to see what he recommends. She mentioned that Luke sat with the Town Planner and some of his schematics included what P&Z recommended.

Mr. Ponziani asked that we look into costs associated with buffering – the main field and then a separate item. Ms. Roberson added that you can't just address the football field and stop right there. Mr. Donovan added that addressing the whole Sudbury Way buffering as needed and options, is up to the town. We'll put that consideration in.

Mr. Neagle added that he agrees with Ms. Roberson. If you're going to change the hours of use, lights and PA, that directly affects Sudbury. We can't look at it as a future. Ms. Checko added that we should list it as an alternate. Remember that we're investing in a state of the art sound system and new lighting. Mr. Roise added that he'd give us options.

Mr. Ponziani asked that we focus on use. Mr. Roise stated that usage statements can restrict lighting after a certain hour, Saturdays/Sundays. Always contingent on lighting and the sound system.

Mr. Filon added that he's spoken with Ms. Checko about this. Light usage for varsity sports would be football games – 4. 1 lacrosse game, Spirit Week. Football is the dominant Friday night activity. Most Varsity Boys and Girl soccer games are played at 3:45. Most of what we talked about, we're done at 5:30. Rec would take over. In November, football is the last team out there for about 2 weeks. They may run over daylight for 45 minutes.

Mr. Roise added that towns with lights, start putting late games so parents can get to the game.

Mr. Filon added that we're not going to consistently place soccer or lacrosse at night. Majority of soccer games will be at 3:45. During Spirit Week, one night and maybe one during senior night.

Mr. Ponziani summed it up by saying from a High School perspective, maybe 10/15 dates a year. Ms. Checko addressed Community use. The biggest impact would be the lights, not the PA. Spring use would stay the same – youth lacrosse, no lights unless the last 30 minutes of practice. In the fall, we'd probably use it for Flag Football. A lot of those kids are young. I don't anticipate it going until 9 – 10:00 at night at all.

The only other thing is if Fisher Meadows floods, I could entertain soccer practices as a backup in the fall. Mr. Donovan added that most rec events do not require sound.

Ms. Checko added that holding a tournament at the High School is not advantageous. Fisher Meadows is much better laid out for a tournament.

One of the biggest issues is the early season when the fields are still frozen or flooded. Different issues. Not enough practice in the preseason for Spring sports.

Mr. Roise added that the only other issue is summertime, with people leaving their windows open. With camps or something going on very early on.

Ms. Checko added that the leagues would have to be willing to pay for the lights. The Board of Ed or Parks and Rec are not going to pick up the tab for using the lights.

Ms. Roberson added that she feels a deeper conversation needs to occur. Her neighborhood has had a lot of discussions about lights. 11-12 nights is what I heard. I'd like to concentrate on the High School, not the Rec teams. Give it time, maybe 5 years. See if it works before we move onto the community.

Mr. Donovan added that we need to get to that point. There has to be a happy medium. We've been here for 3 years. We can reevaluate after 3 years.

Mr. Ponziani interjected that it's a town project, not a high school project.

Ms. Roberson added that if it's a town project then we need to talk about buffering – Foxcroft, Sudbury, West Avon and Fox Den.

Mr. Neagle added that 5 or 6 years ago, we talked about lighting up the fields 10 or 12 nights a year, the people on West Avon Road said they could live with that. Then it evolved to 3 field hockey games every night, then the discussions got out of control. People aren't worried about what's reasonable. They're worried about what's unreasonable. A dozen night games are reasonable. Tournament play or state cup opportunities should be separated from general usage.

Mr. Ponziani asked if there was anything else. Mr. Roise said that between now and the next meeting, he would forward copies of sample usage agreements. So you have something to base your judgements on. Ms. Roberson added that by working together, having the usage as a policy, it gives us a clear understanding of the process. It will help all of us.

V. COMMUNICATION FROM AUDIENCE

Mr. Ponziani opened up the discussion to questions from the audience. One audience member said that as part of the governance document, there needs to be a place for a neighbor to call. If there's an issue, how do I escalate it? Mr. Roise answered that it will be part of that document.

Another audience member noted that he observed during graduation that the field hockey field was used for parking. If we invest a lot of money into turf and drainage, the fields will get damaged. Mr. Donovan answered by saying that we'd look at alternative parking locations. Ms. Jackson added Sycamore could be an alternate with busing to the high school.

Ms. Roberson added that she'd like to add time as part of the usage agreement and what the remedy is. Mr. Ponziani stated that it would be part of the agreement. Ms. Jackson brought up the youth programs and late fall practices that might spill over until 5:30. Does turning the lights on for a half hour constitute an evening, or will it be okay because it's late afternoon? Mr. Roise stated that this has been a challenging point on usage agreements – nailing it down so everyone is comfortable, but with some flexibility.

Another question from the audience regarding buffering and all the options – fence or landscaping. His concern is football season when the trees thin out. They are still able to see light from Sudbury. Mr. Ponziani added that when the trees are the thinnest, there will be no sporting events. Ms. Roberson clarified that the area of concern is where the 90 trees were lost to disease. Mr. Roise added that the modern lighting surprises people. Unless you're right under the light fixture, you can't see the light.

Mr. Roise stated that he will not be at the next meeting. Kurt and Jesse from BSC Group will be in attendance. He will revise Concept A, cost estimate, and schedule. He will provide information about buffering and cost. This will hopefully set you up to have a conversation amongst yourselves about priorities and alternates. We're set on scope of project - Concept A. How do we structure the alternates?

Mr. Ponziani added that he'd like to be in a position to have the committee vote on a recommendation by the next meeting. Ms. Jackson said that it depends if the plans are done according to our recommendations. Mr. Neagle added that our focus needs to be on turf, configuration, track, bleachers, lighting, buffering and use.

Ms. Checko asked if Mr. Roise could make recommendations for us. He said yes. The estimate that he's given us from last year is for the traditional sand and rubber. I would recommend the failsafe system. It's still sand and rubber, but you would put down a pad and a shorter nap turf. Mr. Donovan asked if we could add encapsulated rubber. Mr. Neagle added that his feeling is that we should be lower profile turf, with pad with encapsulated rubber. Mr. Ponziani asked if we could have the cost for these options. Mr. Roise said that it would be about \$130,000/\$140,000 more if you go with the pad and encapsulated infill.

Mr. Ponziani stated that our next meeting is scheduled for June 27th. He asked Mr. Roise if by Friday, he could get us that information. Ms. Roberson asked about drainage. Mr. Roise responded that for drainage we only have an allowance, since none of the engineering has been done yet. It's still a schematic.

Mr. Ponziani added that if we get this information by Friday, we'll be in a position to make recommendations at the next meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

VOTE: Mr. Ponziani asked for a motion to adjourn, Mr. Neagle motioned, Ms. Jackson seconded and all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 AM. None opposed.

Peter Ponziani, *Chairman*

Usha Srivel, *Clerk*