

**Caroline County
Board of Supervisors Agenda
Executive Summary**

Meeting Date: May 10, 2022

Title: New Business – Proposed Improvements to Baseball and Softball Fields at County Park

(Check Mark)

| | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consent | <input type="checkbox"/> Closed Meeting |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Action | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Action (Information Only) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution | <input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint Presentation |

Summary: Attached is a memorandum from Director of Public Works/Utilities Joseph Schiebel requesting authorization to expend up to \$199,100 on improvements to the baseball and softball fields at the county park on Devils Three Jump Road across from Caroline Middle School. The improvements entail installing dugouts and fencing/netting to improve safety, security and the aesthetic appeal of the facilities. Mr. Schiebel has included significantly more detail in his memorandum.

Budget Impact: An itemized breakdown of the cost projection for the baseball/softball field improvements is included in Mr. Schiebel’s memorandum. Staff proposes utilizing \$100,000 from the FY 2021/2022 Public Works budget for this project.

The proposed source of funds for the remaining \$99,100 is the FY 2021/2022 Undesignated General Fund Balance.

Action requested of the Board of Supervisors: Approve expenditure of funds for improvements to the baseball and softball fields as follows:

- 1) Approve following expenditures from the FY 2021/22 Public Works budget totaling \$100,000:

- Repairs to the Courthouse - \$15,000
- Repairs to the Library - \$15,000
- Janitorial Supplies - \$10,000

Repairs and Maintenance - \$28,000
Other Contractual Services - \$19,000
Utilities – Ladysmith Community Center - \$13,000

- 2) Approve expenditure of 99,100 from the FY 2021/2022 Undesignated General Fund Balance.

County of Caroline
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Charles M. Culley, Jr.
County Administrator

FROM: Joseph C. Schiebel
Director of Public Works/Utilities

DATE: May 2, 2022

REGARDING: Improvements to Baseball/softball fields

The current baseball and softballs fields were developed over thirty years ago. The fields receive regular play from the public, Caroline Middle School teams, and adult recreational leagues. Over the last couple of decades, safety standards and preferences have changed dramatically. Today's ball parks are designed with much greater safety concerns for both spectators and the players. Over the last couple of years, staff has redone the infields for both the softball and baseball fields. The outfields have been improved and are well maintained. In fact, staff suggests that the playing fields are as good as any in the district.

However, there are safety concerns that should be addressed. Neither field has dugouts. Dugouts protect the players from foul balls and errant throws. Additionally, today's standard for backstop protection is 30' high fencing and/or netting. The current backstops are in decay and only stand at approximately 18' tall.

During the months of March and April, the Caroline Middle School softball and baseball teams practice and play on these fields. Typically, both teams will host games on the same night and time. Staff has witnessed both of the facilities parking lots full with as many as 150-200 players and spectators during the games. With the two backstops being a mere 60' apart, "tipped" or "fouled" balls from either game pose a safety concern to both the players and spectators in between the two fields. Unfortunately, "heads-up" doesn't tell spectators from what direction or field the ball is coming from. While even a 30' backstop would not stop all "tipped" balls from leaving the field of play, it would likely stop 75-90% of them.

In addition to dugouts for both fields, Staff recommends replacing the existing fence and backstop with 8' chain-link fence topped with 22' of netting for a total of 30' of vertical protection. This would give us durability at ground level why still incorporating the new standard of high vertical protection via durable netting. The netting can be easily lowered and removed during the winter months, can last up to ten years, and is economical to replace.

In order to install the backstop/netting and dugouts, the current fence would need to be removed. The current baseline fencing on both fields is showing its age and would be a candidate for replacement even without the other improvements. The softball field baseline fencing was incorrectly installed thirty years ago. The baseline fence should run at a 90 degree angle to the backstop. However, the first-base line is closer to 70 degrees, which makes for an awkward and confusing baseline when compared to the fence.

The softball field does not currently have an outfield fence, which is needed for competitive play. Staff is requesting that in addition to new baseline fencing, that an outfield fence be installed also.

Staff is also requesting new baseline fencing for the baseball field. The new baseline fence would extend to the outfield fence. The outfield fence is in much better shape and staff does not recommend its replacement.

Extending the baseline fences to the outfield fences will allow staff to close the fields due to inclement weather and/or poor field conditions. Currently, high school groups, among others, will play on the baseball/softball infields when it is wet, leading to soil compaction, poor drainage characteristics, and uneven surfaces. Being entirely fenced in with lockable gates will greatly help in preventing unauthorized use. Additionally, Public Works staff take great pride in prepping the fields for organized play. The ability to keep the public off the field between the time staff preps the fields and gametime would be most welcomed by staff, players, and spectators.

Staff estimates the cost of these repairs and upgrades as follows:

| Item | Cost |
|---|-----------|
| Dugouts | \$23,000 |
| Netting | \$52,000 |
| Fencing/gates | \$106,000 |
| 10% contingency for price increases, etc. | \$18,100 |
| Total: | \$199,100 |

Staff has identified \$100,000 in the current Public Works budget and would request that the Board of Supervisors appropriate the remaining \$99,100 from the unencumbered fund balance.