

Comment re. FY27 Budget hearing on Natural Grass Field at North Potomac Community Center  
(P722701)

As a member of Montgomery County's growing legion of senior (age 65+, age 70+) soccer players, men and women, who have been enjoying the plentiful opportunities to play and practice soccer on the turf field at the Nancy Dacek North Potomac Community Recreation Center, I am concerned to learn of the proposal to replace that turf field with a natural grass field.

The NPCC field has evolved into a mecca for the senior soccer community, providing the venue for our official Sunday 65+ league games for many years and, more recently, for less structured games three other times each week (55+, 70+, and "walking soccer"), all well attended. For many of us, this is the only real exercise we get, and it's also a nexus for friendship. Because the field is artificial turf, we are able to use it all year and in almost all kinds of weather... except when the field is covered in snow or ice.

Although sympathetic to the preference for natural grass in most cases, I believe that in this case keeping the NPCC as a turf field is far preferable, for several reasons:

- (1) The turf field is more durable and suitable to the heavy (every day year-round) use this field gets. A grass field would be torn up and ruined with this kind of use; it would also have to be closed down in the winter.
- (2) Similarly, the turf field can be used when it rains. Grass fields need to be protected when it rains and often for several days thereafter.
- (3) I'm no engineer, but I wonder whether switching to a grass field at this location might turn out to be more difficult and costly than one would normally assume. Have you considered the unusual topography of the site or investigated its history? It looks like it might be a man-made "butte" that was constructed with a flat top at the level of the parking lot, with steep walls dropping off on the other three sides. Are those walls concrete? I'm wondering if the "sub-floor" of the turf field might be paved; I suspect it has some elaborate drainage system in any case. I think the County would be well advised to investigate and ponder further before ripping out the current turf field. Its current condition still seems good and doesn't require immediate replacement. There was just some fairly extensive maintenance done on it within the last year or so.

The NPCC soccer field is a fantastic community resource for an enthusiastic and grateful cohort of senior citizen soccer players who are doing our best to keep that phrase from becoming more of a contradiction in terms than it already is. When the time comes that the NPCC field needs to be replaced, it should continue to be weatherproof turf.

Thank you for your consideration.  
Steven Fox, MD