



TOWN OF KILL DEVIL HILLS

Land Where Flight Began

MEMORANDUM

September 14, 2020

TO: Mayor and Board of Commissioners

FROM: Debora P. Díaz, Town Manager

REF: New Business

1. **Meekins Field Recreation Facilities – Master Plan (Attached NB-1)**

As a part of its work, the West-side Recreation Group (WRG) reviewed the facilities at Meekins Field, and submitted improvement recommendations to the BOC, which were approved at its February 12, 2020, meeting. Due to the construction of the new Kill Devil Hills Water Tower and Communications Monopole, the facilities at Meekins Field have been closed. With those projects in the final stages of completion, the BOC, WRG, and Staff identified a unique opportunity to redevelop the recreational facilities.

Planning Director Meredith Guns' accompanying memorandum highlights the Master Plan layout and amenities that were developed in conjunction with Staff and the Town Engineer from the original conceptual plan. The preliminary cost estimate to complete all elements of \$878,142.44. Some monies were set aside from the water tower project to address the known damage that would occur to Meekins Field during its construction; however, those funds will not complete all elements in the Master Plan.

Staff requests authorization to apply for an Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Tourism Impact Grant, which would need to be submitted by September 30, 2020, to be considered in this grant cycle.

A motion would be in order.

Director of
Planning and Inspections
MEREDITH GUNS

Building Inspector
MARTY SHAW
CHARLES THUMAN

Code Enforcement Officer
JORDAN BLYTHE



Assistant Director of
Planning and Inspections
CAMERON RAY

Senior Planner
RYAN LANG

Zoning Administrator
DONNA ELLIOTT

**THE TOWN OF KILL DEVIL HILLS
NORTH CAROLINA**

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

September 14, 2020

Memorandum

To: Debbie Diaz

From: Meredith Guns, Planning Director *MPS*

Subject: Meekins Field Recreation Facilities - Master Plan

As you recall, in February 2020, the Board of Commissioners reviewed and approved a recommendation from the West Side Recreation Group for improvements to Meekins Field. This project moved to the top of the list because of the unique circumstances at the site. Meekins Field is currently closed due to the construction of the new Kill Devil Hills Water Tower and Communications Monopole. These two projects are in the final stages of completion. The old water tower came down the first week of September. These projects have disturbed much of Meekins Field which will require extensive work to reopen the park. This has created an opportunity to fully redevelop the facility, since significant funds will be required to bring it back to a usable park.

Since that time, Staff has been working with the conceptual plan that was presented to the Board and the Town engineer to create a Master Plan. Attached is the Master Plan layout which includes:

- A 64 space parking area with circular drop off area
- An Art Wall in the parking area for local artist and groups to paint
- A double picnic shelter with restrooms
- A large playground area (equipment to be determined)
- A Splash Pad (the first in Dare County)
- A picnic shelter (#3) for the tennis courts
- A soccer/multi-use field
- A smaller practice field
- Sidewalk/exercise track around the entire facility
- Two new parking areas on the south side of the property
- New fencing in and around the facility
- New irrigation
- Water fountains and benching throughout the facility
- Widening of the current EMS road on the south side to create a safe two-way traffic pattern
- As well as significant site preparation

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Meekins Field Master Plan

Also attached is the preliminary cost estimates to achieve all elements of the Master Plan. The total cost estimate is \$878,142.44. There are some monies allocated to this project from the water tower project because of the known damage that would occur to the existing facility but it will not complete the project.

Staff is requesting Board of Commissioners authorization to apply for the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Tourism Impact Grant. This application is due to the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau by September 30, 2020 and the Town be notified by December 2020 if grant funding has been awarded.

These projects equal a little over one mile of street improvements, and follow the capital improvement recommendations from past years. Mr. Burkheimer noted that American Engineering has submitted proposals of \$58,400 for the Fall 2020 streets and drainage engineering and design phase. A cost of \$6,000 is projected for the bidding phase of the project, for a total of \$62,400. If the Town bids the Fall and Spring projects separately, the engineering proposal for the Spring 2021 is \$48,500, plus the \$6,000 for the bidding phase of the project, for a total of \$54,500. If the Town bids the Fall and Spring projects jointly, then the total bidding phase engineering costs will be \$7,000, a savings of \$5,000.

Staff recommended the BOC:

1. Approve the 2020/2021 fiscal year street recommendation as presented in this memorandum, with joint bidding of the Fall and Spring projects, and corresponding packet materials, with the unimproved portion of Briggs Street recommended to be designed for roadway, drainage and parking improvements and bid as an alternative;
2. Approve engineering services, including preliminary engineering, design, and bidding phases for the combined Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 for a total of \$113,900; and,
3. Authorize expenditure from the Street Capital Reserve Fund for the above stated engineering costs.

Mr. Burkheimer stated that the Town thoroughly evaluates all Town-maintained streets every five years with an eight-item rating scale, with categories of excellent, good, fair (three grades), and poor. When a street's rating falls into the poor category, it is considered a priority to be overlaid or repaired. He noted the next street evaluation was scheduled for 2022.

Commissioner Windley inquired how long it takes the Town to complete the survey. Public Services Director Steve Albright replied that several SISPC members and Staff usually spend six four-hour sessions physically driving around the streets and rating them.

Commissioner Windley moved that the BOC approve the Street improvement recommendation for fiscal year 2020/2021, as presented. Commissioner Ingram provided a second, which was approved with a unanimous 3-0, vote

Committee Reports

West-Side Recreation Group (WRG)— Meekins Field Recommendations In Commissioner Gray's absence, Assistant Planning Director Cameron Ray provided the Meekins Field recommendations from the recent WRG meeting. Mr. Ray noted that the WRG had reviewed Meekins Field, including the online survey results that included (163) entries and a conceptual site plan prepared by Mr. Albright, who is a certified landscape architect. The site plan has been included with the meeting materials.

Meekins Field is currently closed due to the construction of the new Kill Devil Hills Water Tower and Communications Monopole. These projects have disturbed much of Meekins Field, which will require extensive work to reopen the park. The WRG and Staff have identified Meekins Field's current state of disrepair as an opportunity to fully redevelop the facility, since significant funds will be required to reopen it as a usable park.

Mr. Ray stated that this recommendation makes the most of this unique opportunity by proposing modification of the site layout, including changes that will meet several recreational needs. After discussion, the group finalized its recommendations for redevelopment of Meekins Field in conjunction with the attached site plan:

- Expand and improve existing parking and drive aisle to include drop off circle and potential connection to adjacent shopping center.
- Relocate and construct new larger restroom facility.
- Separate cell provider data buildings with public art (art wall) and landscaping buffers.
- Redesign existing softball/temporary soccer field into three (3) multi-use fields to include soccer field (290' x 195'), a practice field (150' x 100'), and year-round turf practice field (150' x 100'). Explore the option of multi-use basketball court. Explore regulation size soccer field as long it does not remove other means of recreation.

The following points were added as a result of continued discussion at the WRG's January 15th meeting.

- Expanded playground area for ages 0-12 years of age, including accessible equipment. Explore recreational trending modern/alternative playground equipment. Examples include: bouldering, climbing wall, ninja course, zip line, and pump track.
- Incorporate greenways and paths around the parking, and/or amenities including adult fitness trail.
- Confirm existing lighting is compatible with any recreation proposed.
- Incorporate ornamental landscaping into parking design.

Mr. Ray recognized WRG members present, Christine Damrose-Mahlmann and T. Dillon Heikens. Commissioner Windley inquired about the size of a regulation soccer field, and whether the existing field would accommodate a regulation size soccer field. Mr. Albright replied that a regulation soccer field is a range of 110-120 yards long and 70-80 yards wide. Mr. Ray noted that recreation leagues do not play on the fields; the field is usually utilized for practice. If a regulation size field were planned within the space, its placement would affect the existing tennis courts. Commissioner Windley inquired about an access path to the west side of the park, and whether it would be affected by the recommendations. Mr. Ray stated that the continued neighborhood accessibility could be incorporated into the plan.

Mayor Sproul inquired about the timeline for beginning the project. Mr. Ray said that Buildings and Grounds Division hoped to gain access to the complex in March; however, the communications monopole was yet to be constructed and the existing water tower must be disassembled and removed. He noted the Staff's facility assessment could take some time. Ms. Guns said that Meekins Field was established through a Land and Water Conservation Grant (LWCG), now known as Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF). If the BOC chooses to

pursue grant options, the grant application would need to be submitted in August. In preparation for that application, a conceptual plan and cost estimates would need to be completed. This would be very helpful if the planned park amenities must be implemented in stages.

Mayor Sproul asked about landscaping buffers for Meekins Field. Mr. Ray stated that in addition to the existing natural buffer, the Staff would recommend buffers for any non-compatible uses with adjoining properties. Mr. Ray said that Staff had recently met with potential playground vendors, who had shared interesting equipment options, including inclusive equipment for children of all abilities.

Through consensus, the BOC directed Staff to move forward with a more formal design and cost estimates, along with some alternative options as recommended by the WRG for final BOC approval that will return to a future BOC meeting.

Commissioners' Agenda

Commissioner Windley

Community Events Commissioner Windley shared that he had attended several community meetings and events, from sponsors Outer Banks Restaurant Association and the Saving Lives Taskforce.

Planning Board Flood Map Presentation He thanked Ms. Guns for her presentation about the new FEMA flood maps and the potentially negative repercussions for the community. He encouraged everyone to maintain their flood insurance coverage on their homes, even if their flood zone changes. Ms. Guns stated that Staff is updating the Town's website with information about the flood maps and new regulations. Public meetings will be set soon for citizens to learn about how their properties will be affected.

Mayor's Agenda

Mayor Sproul shared the following items:

N.C. Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year He congratulated Buxton, N.C., Fire Chief Bryan Perry, who was recently named North Carolina's Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year for 2020. Chief Perry has served as Buxton's Chief for almost 40 years.

Town Hall as Early Voting Site Mayor Sproul reminded everyone that the meeting room will serve as an early voting site for the upcoming primary election. Early voting begins February 13 and will continue through February 28. Early voting is also available on Saturday, February 29, for those who may be working during the week.