


**Open Work Session
Land Acquisition
January 19, 2016**

Mr. Wayne Strausburg, Ms. Pam Oland, Mr. Steve Miller, Mr. Bob Culver, Mr. Paul Wilber and Mr. Brock Parker came before Council. Mr. Parker said there are here to discuss the Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex, and he handed out copies of the most recent survey. Mr. Strausburg said they have completed a meets and bounds survey and the outlined land area, as shown on the survey, has been verified and is what they will be purchasing if they decide to move forward. Mr. Parker said they have completed a meets and bounds survey and a topographic survey that identifies the highs and lows and the buildable acreage. Mr. Parker said the property we are interested in purchasing is referred to as the Guy property, it is just over 20 acres of land. The property consists of predominately woods; there is an old borrow pit or gully, he cannot find much of a drainage pit through there. Mr. Parker said the County is proposing to build three full size regulations baseball fields so that when the need dictates we can convert to softball/baseball, kind of a dual utilization. The baseball fields are official baseball diamonds, the materials of the diamonds are being worked out. We are looking at two full baseball diamonds on the Guy property with the possibility of a third on the lower but level ground closer to the railroad tracks. Mr. Cannon asked if he is referring to where it says wetlands area, to which Mr. Parker responded, yes, his wetlands guy is going to look at it. Mr. Parker said when you go down Naylor Mill Road, you will see the stone parking lot; our property is right behind that. He said that area behind that closest to the existing ball fields is a very high area, then it drops off to a ridge, then it is a level spot, then it drops off again to the ridge area to the wetlands area. He said he feels confident that we can use the middle ridge area for something, but he needs to get the wetlands guy to look at it. Mr. Creamer asked if the lower area is not suitable for a ball field, will it be suitable for parking, to which Mr. Parker responded, yes. Mr. Strausburg said this will give us eight fields for a softball tournament, but four fields for baseball tournaments, which really opens up a new market for tournaments. In speaking with Andy Wisk and Bill McDowell, there is a real market for high quality baseball fields for tournament activity. It is a little bit of a shift from our original thinking, but he thinks it makes sense. Mr. Joe Holloway asked what is the total costs, to which Ms. Oland said they have a million dollars from the state with no match, \$450,000 from tourism, and about \$1 million from the County so they have about \$2.5 million dollars. Ms. Oland said they are putting in fewer fields, but they will have an artificial surface on the infields of the baseball diamonds, so they will attract both baseball and softball events. Mr. Dodd asked what do the Shorebirds have, to which Mr. Strausburg said they have a natural infield, a traditional baseball field. Mr. Dodd then asked in a softball tournament do they roll that up, to which Ms. Oland responded they can play on the artificial surface. Mr. Dodd said he thought they wanted dirt, but they will both play on artificial turf. Ms. Oland said having artificial turf on the diamonds will make the fields playable for both groups, instead of making them just traditional softball or traditional baseball. Mr. Kilmer asked what is the \$200,000 in the CIP for, to which Mr. Strausburg said \$200,000, which they may or may not need, is for the acquisition and design of the Guy property. We had originally been operating under the assumption the City would donate the land. When they pulled that back, we now have to acquire the land. Mr. Kilmer said the money Ms. Oland is talking about is for

everything else, and the CIP is for the acquisition and design, to which Mr. Strausburg confirmed that is correct. Mr. Strausburg said next they have to determine what the total development costs are going to be. Mr. Matt Holloway asked, in looking at the survey, what are the proposed property lines in the back, asking if we have fields on some else's property, to which Mr. Strausburg said we have two fields on City property, and Executive Culver has had discussions with Mayor Day about securing long term use of those two rectangular fields. Mr. Cannon asked Mr. Miller if he would refresh the public on the economic impact of this project. Mr. Miller said when you look at the economic impact on tourism in the County, it is about \$48 million, two-thirds of that is a result of the existing Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex. Mr. Miller said he thinks if they were to expand the complex as discussed, over the next three years, the opportunity to grow and bring in new business is strong in baseball. Mr. Miller said in speaking with their folks, they will be able to grow that \$48 million to over \$60 million in the next three years. He said the opportunity is here, we need to retain what we have, but there is also an opportunity to grow. Mr. Miller said you will not find four big diamonds like this in the area, so we would be strategically a hub for that type of activity for new events. Mr. Cannon asked who would come to these events for baseball, to which Mr. Miller said there are different organizations. Last year they started with an organization called Dynamic Baseball, and they ran two small tournaments, but part of the pitch was over the next two years to grow a base so they can grow into a facility like this. They are very intrigued and, in fact, they added a third event for this coming summer. Mr. Miller said there is an organization called Athletics Baseball. They run national tournaments that are basically like our world series in that they run six days. The nice thing is they run Fridays through Thursdays and they require the teams to stay six nights, which most of that would be weekday activity. Mr. Miller said there are different organizations out there that do this type activity, but baseball is where he thinks we have a lot of opportunity to grow. Mr. Kilmer said the newspaper said USSSA is willing to sign a multi-year contract if we did this. Mr. Miller said there is no guarantee. Typically, what they do is sign a one year contract that states they will come back a second year in one form or another, but we do not know what age groups, if there are multiple teams, etc. Mr. Matt Holloway asked if there is any value in the timber that will have to be cut for the diamonds, to which Mr. Strausburg said they are not sure yet. Mr. Hall asked about the size of the diamonds, to which Mr. Parker said the baseball diamonds are 375 and softballs diamonds are 300. Mr. Hall clarified that the intent of the work session was to let Council know that the project can be done, to which Mr. Strausburg said that is correct. Mr. Strausburg said the Option Agreement expires in the middle of February, so we will proceed ahead. They will have to do a Phase I, which is an Environmental Study, and that can be done pretty quickly, but they did not want to proceed with further costs if there was a majority of objections. Mr. Hall said his concern is that if we focus more on baseball are we going to have a shortage of baseball fields as the smaller diamonds are not big enough for baseball. Mr. Strausburg explained that we have a shortage of baseball fields now and that is what we are trying to address. He said we only have one. Mr. Hall asked if we can have the younger age groups use the smaller diamonds, to which Mr. Miller said when we have multiple age group events, we could have the younger age groups use the 300 foot fence and get portable mounds, but the goal is to attract those who would use the bigger diamonds, but you could use both. Mr. Dodd thanked Mr. Miller for looking at resources to attract baseball events to

the area. Mr. Kilmer thanked administration for having the work session as an open work session.



John T. Cannott, President

Matt Holloway, Vice President

Absent

Ernest F. Davis, District 1

Marc K

Marc Kilmer, District 2

Larry W Dodd

Larry W. Dodd, District 3

John B Hall

John B. Hall, District 4

Joe Holloway

Joe Holloway, District 5

Matthew E Creamer

Matthew E. Creamer, Council Administrator