

Open Work Session

Discussion on Capital Project at Harmon Field

October 5, 2021

Mr. Steve Miller, Director of Recreation, Parks & Tourism, came before Council and thanked them for having him talk about the proposed project for Harmon Field. He said Mr. Holloway, Mr. McCain, and Mr. Hastings heard a similar presentation last night, and he is impressed with the folks here tonight who also heard this last night. He said, for the benefit of the public and also for the other Councilmembers who were not able to attend last night, he would like to make a short presentation on what is being proposed for Harmon Field. He said he is going to break the presentation into four simple parts. He said first he will give a brief background on the history of Harmon Field; secondly, he will provide a general overview of what they are proposing to do at the park; third, he will outline benefits of why they think this project would be beneficial to the County; and lastly, he will touch on funding sources they have identified, which they believe could accomplish the project and do so in a very short period of time. He said, once his presentation is done, he will be happy to answer any questions Council may have.

Mr. Miller said, in terms of history of Harmon Field, it actually goes back to 1928 when funds were given to the City of Salisbury by the Harmon Foundation, which is named after William E. Harmon, a real estate developer and philanthropist from New York City. He said the funds were used to build a playground and ballfield on Carroll Street, and that became one of the first public recreation sites in Wicomico County.

Mr. Miller said, in 1969, the location of Harmon Field switched from that original location on Carroll Street to the current location on Churchill Avenue next to the YMCA in a land swap between the County and the City. He said, at that time, the County needed a piece of property for a Health Department building, so they swapped with the City and the City built on this site what they called at the time the new Harmon Field. He said, later in the 1990s the City conveyed that back to the County, and that is where things stand today - it is a County-owned park as part of their park system.

Mr. Miller said, since at one time Harmon was one of the only lighted fields around, for many years Harmon served as the hub site for recreation activity in Wicomico County for things like men's and women's softball, and college softball, and for special events like the King and His Court events. He said he has heard many, many stories from many people about people lining the field and some of the great nights and events that would happen there, and youth programs, such as baseball, softball, soccer, and events under the lights. He said, for the 75-year anniversary, they did a lot of research on this park and many others, and no doubt there were glorious hay days at Harmon, and there were a lot of great moments there. He said some may have witnessed these moments, and some may have participated in those great moments, but, as they know, time marches on and things change, and that time has passed. He explained, whereas, at one time Harmon was one of the only places to play ball, today, just in the County-owned park system, they have more than 40 ball diamonds where baseball and softball are played. He added, if they were to count municipal parks, Board of Education facilities, and quasi-public facilities like the Salvation Army, there are more than 90 baseball diamonds in the County, so there are plenty of places to play ball. He clarified, that is a good thing, not a negative, and it is a wonderful thing, as they love baseball and softball, and there are a lot of places for residents to be able to play the sports.

Referring to his presentation, Mr. Miller said they can see what has happened to Harmon over the years. He explained, as more and more parks were built and those parks were spread throughout the County, and more ballfields were built, including eight at the Athletic Complex, while that growth was happening, Harmon Field got older and older. He said, in 2015 the light poles had rotted, so those lights had to come down, and what they have ended up with is a single field site with no lights, no permanent restroom, and no operational concession stand for which there is very little and minimal public demand or need. He clarified, that is not his opinion, here are the numbers:

Mr. Miller said, taking the 2020 COVID numbers out of the equation, over the last four years the field has seen about 77 hours on average per year of organized play, and the bulk of that 77 hours per year is their in-house County leagues that have practices, so practices are essentially what it has been used for. He said, to put that in perspective, one ballfield at the Athletic Complex averages about 1,100 hours per year of play, so they would get 70 hours of play on one field there in about two weeks. He said, keeping in mind that is one ballfield, and they have eight ballfields at the Athletic Complex, they can see what has happened over time; the hub has simply changed locations from places like Harmon to places like Parker, Delmar, Fruitland Little League, East Wicomico, Willards, etc., so there are many, many places to play, and that has spread. He said, in terms of Harmon, what they have now is what was once a hub facility is now a seldom used practice field, and that is just kind of the reality of where things are today.

Mr. Miller said they are proposing to do an approximately \$1 million dollar renovation to the site, which would include a brand new playground that would replace the giraffe swing set from the 1970s. He said they would add a second basketball court to the site, and he will say, though the softball field is often vacant, most times when he drives by Harmon there are people on that basketball court. He said there are a lot of folks who use that court, and this proposal would add a second court and also light the courts, which they think would be a tremendous boost to the community, and they think it will get a lot of use. He explained, a big part of this, which has not been talked about as much, is the basketball piece. He said, lastly, they would convert the softball field into a 12-court pickleball complex, among other park improvements.

Mr. Miller said he knows Council has heard a little bit about pickleball from the folks who have come here, but, for the viewing public in case they do not know what the sport is, he has a very short one-minute video just to give them an introduction to the sport, and then he will continue with the presentation. He then showed the video talking about pickleball.

Mr. Miller said, as pointed out in the video, pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the United States today. He said there are over 4 million people playing the sport, and that continues to grow by the day. He explained, one of the appeals of pickleball is not only is it a fast-growing sport, but it is a very diverse sport. He said, as they can see on the chart on his slide, and as they have heard in testimony talking about youth and adults playing, pickleball is not just a sport for old folks and it is not just a sport for kids, it is a sport for everybody. He said people of all ages – youth, adults, seniors – can play pickleball, and it is a sport that can be adapted. He said, for folks who have disabilities, they can also play the sport, so that is an appeal, certainly from where he sits as the Director of Recreation, Parks & Tourism, so it is a sport that literally anybody can play, and that is one of the great benefits about it.

Mr. Miller said he is going to give two primary reasons why this proposal makes sense and will benefit the County. He said it gives County residents a new recreation asset that would meet the public demand. He explained, his Department gets calls every single week from people requesting pickleball

courts, asking where they can play, and where the courts are, and they get those calls every single week. He said there are over 250 regular pickleball players, and Council heard from some of them tonight through the Salisbury Pickleball Club and other associated groups, but there are over 1,000 regular players within an hour's distance of Salisbury, and he thinks last night was a small demonstration of that. He clarified, they had a public meeting at the Civic Center, and over 150 people showed up, so it was an incredible turnout. He said it was a very positive group, and a very enthusiastic group that came out last night, and he thinks that is just a small piece of the pickleball community that is out there.

Mr. Miller reported, to meet the demand at this point, as they have been updating their tennis courts, they have been trying to install pickleball lines at various places in the County, but the problem is that in most of those cases the majority are shared-use courts. He clarified, in other words, it is tennis and pickleball, or basketball and pickleball, and sometimes that can lead to conflict. He said Mr. Davis was at the Billie Jean Jackson Park this weekend doing the cleanup of the community, and that was tremendous and they had a great turnout, but one thing that came up while they were there was that a pickleball event was happening on the basketball court. He explained, one of the concerns from somebody was what would happen if the basketball guys showed up and wanted to play pickup like they normally do and there is a conflict, and that is one of the problems with having a shared-use facility or shared-use courts, so that is one of the problems that exists in a shared-use situation.

Mr. Miller said another issue they have is that they have two spots in the County where they have exclusive pickleball courts, but those facilities are not designed for high traffic or parking. He said one example is Kilbirnie Park, which is a neighborhood park that is designed for people to walk to and enjoy an activity and then walk home. He explained, there are two pickleball courts there, which is wonderful and the residents love it, but the problem is that many other folks from all over the place go to Kilbirnie and are overrunning that park, and that park is not designed to handle that kind of traffic or parking. He said having a dedicated pickleball-only complex would give members of this community a new asset and would open up opportunities from their youth all the way up to their seniors for people who want to stay active and play a sport, and that is one big reason this is a benefit to their residents.

Mr. Miller said the second big reason is that this would provide another tourism attraction for their County. He said the Councilmembers know this, but for the public, in Wicomico County they have had a lot of success running both regional and national amateur sports tournaments in sports like baseball, softball, wrestling, and basketball. He said they have hosted nationally-recognized events that bring thousands of people into their community every year and millions of dollars into their community every single year. He said these are people who stay in their hotels, eat in their restaurants, and shop in their stores, and it is a tremendous boost to their community. He said having this complex in this location would give them the opportunity to host major tournament events and bring revenue into the County. He said Auburn, Alabama is an example of where they recently built a 12-court pickleball complex similar to what they are proposing here, and they are bringing in over \$1 million dollars of direct spending into their community and over 3,000 hotel room nights a year just from this pickleball facility. He said, as a matter of fact, in that location it has gone so well that they are now constructing 12 more courts and changing it to a 24-court complex because the demand has just exceeded what they have available. He said they have been talking about this in Wicomico County for many months, but they decided to test this out and see if the interest was truly there, so they hosted two tournaments over the last several months and here are the results:

Mr. Miller said the first event they did was back in March where they just kind of threw it together in a few weeks, and they had 114 participants come to Billie Jean Jackson from five different states – Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, and Delaware. He said then this past weekend they had another tournament at Billie Jean Jackson and had another 107 participants that again came from all over the mid-Atlantic, including two participants from Florida, so they have seen firsthand that the interest is there both locally and from people driving from a distance to be here.

Mr. Miller said one of the benefits of Harmon as a location is that Harmon would give the opportunity to do even bigger events as this grows into the future. He explained, not only would they have the 12 dedicated courts as a hub facility at Harmon, but within walking distance of Harmon are the Civic Center, the YMCA, the City Park tennis courts, which could be lined for an event, and there are three local high schools with tennis courts, so within a one-mile radius of Harmon Field they could have as many as 75 pickleball courts, which puts them in the game for regional and national events. He said courts that are in proximity of hotels, restaurants, and a downtown area are what tournament organizers want; they want to come to a place where all of that is as close together as possible. He said, with the location at Harmon they have the opportunity not just to do events on the 12 courts, but they could put themselves in the game to do regional and national type events as the infrastructure is all there. He clarified, the Mayor of Salisbury came to their meeting last night and announced on the spot that the City will donate the cost to hook up to the water and sewer at Harmon, so everything is there, it is a prime opportunity, and it gives them another tool, not only for their local residents, but another tool in the toolbox to draw people to this County who might not otherwise come here, and it gives them a reason to come.

Mr. Miller said the last part is how they pay for this, and, to him, this is one of the more exciting parts. He said, as he said earlier, they estimate this to be about a million dollar project, and they have identified two funding sources, which, in the end, will not require asking the County for a single dollar from the County budget in order to make this happen. He said the first funding source is a \$700,000 State grant through the Local Park and Playground Infrastructure Bill that was passed by the Maryland General Assembly last year. He explained, that State grant requires \$0 in local match, and it is pending right now at the State, and they expect it to be approved in the next month, but all they need is the endorsement from this Council that they would accept the funds if it was approved. He said, if they get that endorsement, those funds would be approved, he believes, in the next month. He clarified, he wants to point out to the Council and the public that this grant is unique in that it is an FY22 only grant. He explained, this was a special grant that was passed in part because of COVID and people recognizing the importance of parks and how people are using parks, so they put in a special Bill for park projects, such as the one they are talking about tonight. He clarified, in other words, if they kicked the tires on this and said they do not want to do this and will do it next year, that \$700,000 would not be there, so they would have to find a different funding source or ask the taxpayers to foot the bill, so this is one funding source that is right there for them to make this happen.

Mr. Miller said the second funding source would come from a \$300,000 contribution from the YMCA, which is adjacent to Harmon, as part of an agreement between the County and the YMCA. He said they have a draft MOU, which the Council has, which would need Council approval, but he would like to take a moment and provide a few highlights of that agreement because he thinks there has maybe been a lot of confusion and people not understanding what is being proposed as far as the agreement goes. He reported, some basic highlights from what they have agreed to in principle are that the YMCA has agreed to contribute \$300,000 towards the construction of this project, which, to him, is unheard of that

a nonprofit would put that much skin in the game for a project like this that is not even on their property. He said, to him, that is a tremendous commitment from the YMCA, but they have agreed to contribute \$300,000 towards building it. He said, not only would they contribute the capital funds, but they would also provide access to the parking lot. He explained, the County's parking lot is adjacent, but they believe with the increased use of the basketball courts, the playground, and pickleball, they will probably be about 15 parking spots short on busy nights, and that does not even count tournaments. He said the YMCA has agreed to connect their parking lot at no charge and allow users to use both parking lots and even to tie into their stormwater infrastructure as they develop the park, so they have given the County the ability, if that can work out, to tie into their infrastructure.

Mr. Miller said lastly, the County and the YMCA would work together to offer public programming at the site, which would include clinics, leagues, lessons, and tournaments. He said he wants to make special emphasis of this point, and it is spelled out in the agreement, but the County would maintain 100 percent control of the facility, and the County would maintain 100 percent control of the schedule for the facility. He clarified, the County is not donating anything to the YMCA, they are not building anything for the YMCA, or for YMCA members. He said he thinks, if anything, they could make the opposite case that the YMCA is helping the County build a facility, but, either way, they are not donating anything, and this would be a County facility 100 percent under the control of the County. He said any programs that the YMCA would conduct at the site would have to be approved by the County, so the County would control that schedule, and the YMCA has agreed to make any of their programs available and open to the public. He clarified, in other words, nothing would be exclusive to just YMCA members, so, if there is a youth program, anybody could sign up for it whether they are a member of the YMCA or not, so everything would be open to the public.

Mr. Miller said, from a logistic standpoint, like many other organizations, the County is having difficulty finding staff to run programs, to clean parks, and to do the things that they do, so to have a partner agency to help them execute and run programs for the public would be a tremendous boost to the County for many reasons.

Mr. Miller said he would like to point out that, even when programs are taking place, whether they are County programs or the YMCA is operating and running the program, they would always leave several courts open for drop-in open play. He said, just like right now with basketball, someone can bring their ball and drop in and play, so they would leave multiple courts open at all times for the public to come in for open play. He clarified, the only exception to that might be a big tournament event. He explained, if they had a major event, they would probably want to use every court they have, but that would be the exception, and otherwise they would leave courts open for the public to come and play.

Mr. Miller said, essentially, this is what they are trying to do. He said, to summarize this, to him, this is the opportunity they have sitting here tonight; \$1 million dollars is sitting on the table for them to renovate a 50-year old park, a park that certainly could use renovation where not one dime of local tax dollars is being requested. He said they could provide something they do not have in this community, a new recreation amenity to give them another selling point for their tourism efforts and bring additional people into their community, and they could put Harmon Field back on the map. He said he knows there has been a lot of talk about Harmon, and they have probably talked more about Harmon in the past two months than they have in about ten years, but doing this project would put Harmon Field back on the map and turn what used to be a hub facility back into a hub by injecting life and bringing the people

back to this facility. He said they feel what better way to honor the Harmon name and the tradition and memories of everything that happened at Harmon than to bring people back and make this a hub facility again, and they believe this project would certainly do that. He concluded, he is happy to answer any questions Councilmembers may have.

Mr. McCain thanked Mr. Miller and said he thinks his last comment really sums everything up - the fact that it provides a new opportunity to their citizens they do not currently have in their County, and things like that go to improve the quality of life. He said the best part about it from a byproduct standpoint is it is also an economic engine at the same time, and they are able to accomplish that without using their local tax dollars, so there are a lot of positives.

Mr. Hastings said Mr. Miller has done his homework and then some. He said this looks fantastic, and they have clearly listened to the community. He clarified, the community said this is what they need, and they have an opportunity here with the YMCA, and it is a great partnership and they are revitalizing a park that really could use a facelift and then some. He said, as far as he is concerned, where do they sign on the dotted line because this is great and fantastic.

Mrs. Acle said she really appreciates Mr. Miller doing this and having the public meeting and everyone coming, but she just wants to take them all back to 2008 when there were probably 300 people at the Rockawalkin Church wanting a park. She said the County bought 100 acres for them to have a park, they have paid for two engineering studies, and those citizens still do not have a park. She said there are 100 acres on Levin Dashiell Road, and it is hard for her to swallow this when they are still waiting for even a plan for a park. She said it is not like they do not have land that they could develop a pickleball court, they do, they already have it, and this is just tough for her.

Mr. McCain responded, those are two different discussions. He said trying to link those two things together, he does not get that, to which Mrs. Acle responded, from the money aspect, they are going to take this money. She then asked if this money is only allocated for a public-private partnership, to which Mr. Miller responded, if they were to propose doing this somewhere else, certainly the YMCA is not going to kick in \$300,000 because they are adjacent to this. He said he hears what Mrs. Acle is saying with the West Metro Core, and, as Council knows, last month they got approval and funding for a masterplan. He explained, they are doing about 100 things at once, and there is no reason why they cannot do that and this as he does not see it as one or the other.

Mr. Miller said he will also point out two other things. He said he mentioned the tourism value of Harmon, and the ability to go outside of Harmon within walking distance is huge. He said to have a facility within the City where it is accessible to the most amount of people is ideal for that reason, and for many reasons, in addition to the contribution partnership from the YMCA, so he thinks the opportunity at Harmon is where they want to go. He said he thinks at West Metro, quite honestly, part of the public planning process will be to do that masterplan, but he thinks they could do some pickleball courts out there as well. He said they put two in Sharptown and they put two in Kilbirnie, and he thinks the residents on the west side may enjoy that quite a bit, but, for their hub facility, he thinks that needs to be central for the reasons he outlined, and he just thinks it is the right opportunity. He clarified, the grant referenced is an FY22 grant, and he looks at West Metro and Connelly Mill, and he would love to throw \$700,000 at Connelly Mill, but they are nowhere close, so that grant money would not help them there as it has to be something that is ready, and this is ready.

Mr. Holloway said last night a gentleman came to the meeting, and it was advertised that there would be questions and comments, but they would not take any questions, so he emailed him two questions, and he is going to read them:

How many new County staff members are going to be necessary to run the facility in an optimal fashion so that it succeeds and is able to function as a tourism hub?

Mr. Miller responded, as far as full-time staff, he does not anticipate any. He said, when talking about other parks, it may be a different story, but for this he does not anticipate additional fulltime staff. He said they would need part-time staff to run programs. Mr. Holloway clarified, it will take staff they already have, to which Mr. Miller responded, yes. Mr. Holloway clarified, there will not be any additional staff that will need to be hired or paid to run this, to which Mr. Miller responded, any time they are running programs, they are going to need part-time people, but that is correct for full-time staff.

Mr. Holloway read the next question:

What is the preliminary estimated revenue for the pickleball facility?

Mr. Miller responded, if they are talking about program revenue, he does not have a number. He said one of the things they have is flexibility in the agreement with the YMCA as to who is going to run the programs, and that is something that would need to be fleshed out. He clarified, depending on who is running the program, that would change that estimate, so he does not have that number right now. He said he can tell Mr. Holloway that he thinks what they experienced in Alabama as far as tournaments, and with the two trial tournaments they did at Billy Jean Jackson on makeshift courts getting people from all over the mid-Atlantic, he thinks they certainly could get similar results from the tourism end.

Mr. Cannon thanked Mr. Miller for his excellent presentation, and said he applauds Mr. Miller because he thinks he is always ahead of the curve and always has been. He said Mr. Miller demonstrated that with the Henry Parker Complex, he demonstrated that with Field 7½, and now he is looking at another public-private partnership with the YMCA. He said these things are not always easy to put together, but Mr. Miller has been very successful with it.

Mr. Cannon said he recognizes Mrs. Acle's concerns, but, as Mr. McCain said, one does not preclude the other, and they can work on a parallel course to have both done. He said he thinks it is instrumental that they have the \$700,000 they know they are getting from the State, and, again, that is something they do not want to just bypass, drag their feet for two weeks, and then the next thing they know, and the State has done that before where they have said, if they are not interested, it is gone.

Mr. Cannon said he again commends Mr. Miller for this and he is fully in favor of it. He said he likes the alliance Mr. Miller has created, and he is really excited about the idea of tournaments and the money that will bring to this area. He said one thing people always complain about in any community is there is nothing to do, but Mr. Miller is constantly growing that consistently so there is something to do in Wicomico County, and there are a variety of things to do in Wicomico County, this being just a new addition. He said his concern was the viability of Harmon Field, but Mr. Miller proved that very well. He said he is so in favor of this, but he would only request that maybe they could put the name of Harmon Field at the Pony League, or at some other area where they could at least still respect the name of Harmon as it was originally intended.

Mr. Miller thanked Mr. Cannon for his comments and said there is actually language in the deed that requires that property to remain Harmon Field. He clarified, if it were to relocate, they would need to work through that, but they do not have intentions of changing the name of the park, so it would still remain Harmon Field, they would just have different amenities there.

Mr. Holloway said he read the agreement several times, and they always hope for the best when they enter into an agreement. He said the YMCA is putting in \$300,000 and the County is going to have control of the park, and anybody can use the park without being a member of the YMCA. He then asked what will happen with the \$300,000 in a year or so if suddenly the YMCA or the County is not happy with the arrangement, and would the County have to pay that back because there is nothing in the agreement that specifies what happens if one party fails to hold up its obligation and the other party is not happy. Mr. Miller responded, there is some termination language in the agreement that would talk about a separation. Mr. Holloway said he read that, but it did not say anything about the money, to which Mr. Miller responded, it is noted in the agreement that the Harmon funding is prioritized for the pickleball, as he thinks that is their vested interest where they see the most potential. He said, if something were to happen in between, there is a comment where he believes it would be a prorated type situation where, if something fell apart to that level, the County would have to weigh out in a prorated way if there is a reimbursement. He said the way they have proposed this is that they would forward fund this through Tourism, so they would reimburse the County, and this will give the YMCA some time to do some fundraising because he presumes that is where their funding is going to come from. He clarified, he certainly hopes that would not happen, but he understands.

Mr. Dodd said he was not at the meeting last night because he had to Chair another meeting at 7:00 p.m. and he would have loved to have been there. He then asked if Mr. Miller knows that the Delmarva Pony League had a meeting on Wednesday and they sent a letter of intent because they would love to have that field. He said they have 300 kids playing and there is only one baseball field, and they have a need for softball, so that is 300 families who are all local. He said Harmon Field is a nice field. He said it has a two-story brick concession stand, press box, brick dugouts, and the bleachers are there, so it would not cost anything. He said he is not against pickleball at all, and, as a matter of fact, he wants to see pickleball, but with the presentation Mr. Miller just gave, he expected to see that for the West Metro Core. He said that is what he expected to see, and he would like to see pickleball at Winterplace Park, Naylor Mill Road, or any of the schools because they have a lot of property. He then asked, why not put it there and invite the schools to be a part of it? He said they have 300 kids in one field, and they have a need for softball, so what is the County going to do for them, to which Mr. Miller responded, he would be happy to work with them, but he will tell Council that he has not heard from them directly that there was a need. Mr. Dodd said he sent Mr. Miller that letter, to which Mr. Miller responded, yesterday. He said he will tell Council that, for fall leagues, for example, most Little Leagues do not play in the fall. He explained, Fruitland does fall ball, and East Wicomico has a couple of teams he thinks, to which Mr. Dodd responded, Fruitland has been playing fall ball for about ten years. Mr. Miller clarified, that is right, but the majority of Little Leagues, such as Delmar, do not have a fall league. He said they talked to the East Wicomico President today after having received that email, and their fields sit empty in the fall, so it would be a great fundraiser for the Little League if they wanted to use those fields. He said they are about to put lights on fields 7 and 8 at Parker, so they will have the ability to put people out at Parker, especially in the fall when it gets dark early, so they will have eight fields with lights. He said they will work with anybody, and if the Pony League has a need, they would be happy to sit down

with them and find opportunities for them. He clarified, again, he does not think there is a shortage. Mr. Dodd said they have already expressed that they have a need, and Harmon Field is a short walk right around the corner on the other side of the Elks Club, so, to him, that looks like a good option. He said he wants to see this come to fruition as he thinks it is a great idea, but he would like to see it at all of their parks, and he would like Mr. Miller to really consider Harmon Field for the 300 kids who are playing fall ball at Delmarva Pony League. He said, if they are playing with 300 kids in the fall, he can imagine how many kids are going to be playing in the spring during regular baseball season, to which Mr. Miller responded, again, they are happy to meet with them and happy to help them, and certainly want them to find a place to play, so they will work with them. Mr. Dodd said he knows they are watching and he will be in touch with them.

Mr. Hastings said, on that point, he thinks what makes this space so important is that it is right next to the YMCA. He said they have a partnership with the YMCA for \$300,000 on the table, and he thinks that is what is most important about this space for pickleball. He said, in addition to being walking distance to the City Park, he could go on and on why this is a great location. He said Mr. Miller is actually one of the best at trying to help work with the community to help find needs, so he is sure he can help the Pony League find a better space. He said, for this space here and now, he thinks this is a great proposal, and he is fully in support.

Mr. Miller said he does not know what the next steps are, but one of the things they are requesting tonight is, in order for the State grant to be approved, the Board of Public Works has asked for a consensus from the Council that they will in fact accept that grant. He said that is one of the things he would like to see resolved so they can go to the Board of Public Works and say that this is something they would like to see happen. He clarified, he does not know if that is a possibility tonight.

Mr. Cannon asked if Mr. Miller is looking for a letter of support, to which Mr. Miller responded, yes. Mr. Cannon said they can do that in a Work Session.

Mr. McCain said, given that time is of the essence, he thinks they should do that.

Mr. Dodd asked if they should do that without a Public Hearing, to which Mr. McCain responded, they do not need a Public Hearing for a consensus.

Mrs. Hurley clarified, giving a consensus on the grant would not require a Public Hearing, but if Council desires to move forward with the actual agreement, it is a ten-year agreement, so that does require a Public Hearing. She said they could have that on November 2, 2021 if Council agrees to that.

Mr. John Psota, Acting County Executive, then came before Council and asked if he could interject. He said they need to let the State know something more concrete than a future work session. He clarified, their time is extremely short on this for some reasons, and they need to act now as far as letting the State know that they are serious about this proposal, and the proposal is specifically for Harmon Field for the project that Mr. Miller has proposed. He said that is what they are kindly asking for Council to consider to give them some sort of guidance so they can tell the State that they are serious about this particular proposal. He clarified, that is what they are asking for.

Mr. Hastings said he would be happy to vote on that now if they are able to do so to at least get a letter and start that process. Mr. Cannon, Mr. McCain, and Mr. Davis said they are in favor of the project. Mr. Holloway and Mrs. Acle said yes to the letter. Mr. Dodd said, he has no problem sending a letter, but if

something happens and they say no, that will affect them in the future for requests for funding, but he has to consider his constituents, so he is just going to say no. He clarified, they have the votes, but he will say no because of his constituents who play baseball at Delmarva Pony League.

Mr. McCain asked if this letter will be coming from the Executive, or will it come from the Council, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, she can write it. Mr. Dodd agreed that Mrs. Hurley can write the letter and said he can sign it.

Mrs. Hurley asked if they are going to decide on the agreement tonight as far as doing the Public Hearing because she needs to start the advertising process, to which Mr. Dodd responded, Mrs. Hurley said November 2, and he thought that was a good idea. Mrs. Hurley clarified, she just wanted to make sure there was a consensus, to which there was overall consensus to move forward.

There was no further discussion.



Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3




Joe Holloway, Vice President, District 5



John T. Cannon, At-Large




William R. McCain, At-Large




Ernie Davis, District 1



Nicole Acle, District 2



Josh Hastings, District 4



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator