



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Finance Committee

Councillor-at-Large McDonald, Chair
Councillor Condon, Vice-Chair
Councillor O'Malley
Councillor-at-Large Colon-Hayes
Councillor Simonelli
Councillor Linehan

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

5:30 PM

215 Pleasant Street
Room 105
Malden, MA 02148

<https://cityofmalden.zoom.us/j/96747054007>
No pass code needed.

Roll Call

Present: 6 - Councillor at Large Carey McDonald, Councillor Paul Condon, Ryan O'Malley, Karen Colon Hayes, Chris Simonelli and Amanda Linehan

Also Present: Councillors Murphy, Crowe, Spadafora, Winslow
Maria Luise-Mayor's Office, Dan Grover-Treasurer, Zaheer Samee-Assistant
City Solicitor, Deb Burke-Director OSPCD, Alex Pratt- OSPCD, Steve O'Neil-
Consultant Hanner Swansen, Ron Hogan, Carol Ann Desiderio, City Clerk

Councillor McDonald called the meeting to order at 5:48 PM.

Minutes to be Approved

[207-23](#)

Minutes of May 9, 2023 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Simonelli, seconded by Councillor at Large Colon Hayes, that the Committee Minutes of May 9, 2023 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

Tabled Papers

[139-23](#)

Order: That \$1.3 million of available general fund free cash is appropriated to fund additional costs association with the improvements to Roosevelt Park

Sponsors: Carey McDonald

Attachments: [Final Paper: 139-23](#)
[Mayor's Finance Follow Up Letter May 9 2023](#)
[Mayor's Memo on Roosevelt Park 3 28 23](#)
[Turf vs Grass May 9 2023](#)
[Park Utilization Overview](#)
[OSPDCD Roosevelt finance presentation April 25 2023](#)

Councillor McDonald explains at the last meeting they had discussion about the usage of the fields the demand for playing time for our sports team. We just began discussing with our staff from the office of OSPDCD and our associated consultant about costs of the plan and any alternatives with turf vs grass. We will continue discussion from there. Debbie Burke spoke about the discussion of turf vs grass last week and said one of the closing remarks was about the maintenance and cost of maintaining the grass field. She was not sure if there was a good understanding of the maintenance and issues tied to natural grass fields it is not only irritating, mowing or fertilizing but also letting them rest. There has been pros and cons around conversations on this matter. The two key items of natural grass is rest and recovery. Water retention is a primary concern being saturated with water causes significant damage. With heavy rain the grass struggles and can take up to 30 days to recover. When Marblehead has inclement weather they have to decide whether to cancel events and close the grass fields. You have to consider athlete safety, there should be no presence of any standing water on the grass, you should make no footprints and the top two inches of the soil should not be muddy which would cause limit of use. There was an email sent by a constituent to the office of OSPDCD, Mayor's office and City Council which talked about brockfill mix which we have discussed using instead of crumb rubber. It was not decided on it was one of the alternatives which was suggested for an infill mix. We did speak with vendors about various mixes and we landed on more research and investigation on brockfill. We landed on Somerville which has a beautiful field right next door to an early learning center and is an apples to apples field with what we are trying to accomplish. We spoke to the facilities manager there, Brad Milprin and he said they did the field five years ago with brockfill mix and it is still in great condition and would be willing to speak to anyone who has questions. The email suggested they used brockfill in Maryland and the pictures showed how it has deteriorated. The back story is that originally it was designed with zeofill and it failed. The Maryland people reached out to brockfill and they suggested they had to follow a series of specs which the town did not follow and they admit that is why it failed. Steve O'Neil said zeofill is frequently used on synthetic turf fields for pets and is used for a cushion and deodorizing effect. When zeofill breaks down it becomes sludge like and the field could not drain properly. The school district turned to brockfill and they initially declined the opportunity. After engaging in conversation with Maryland, Brock agreed to take the opportunity but with specific guidelines with the carpet and drainage. The town went ahead but did not involve with remedial procedures. The failure was the drainage not the brockfill product. If you choose to go with natural grass you need to have strict policies for use during inclement weather and also after the inclement weather. Another thing is you have to limit the use of the field in the corner areas the middle of the field and the goalie box so it does not get the wear and tear. You have to rotate the field 90 degrees with play. You do not have that ability at Roosevelt Park. Steve does not ever say that natural grass is not an option however you need to think about the limitations we would have to manage if we were to have a natural grass field there and the City wanted to get optimum use of the field. The first thing you would have to decide is what condition of grass would be acceptable depending on hours of use of the field. It also comes down to the type of natural grass. They each have implications and costs with associated with them. His fear would be

investing in a sand based field with the associated elevated cost only to put use on the field and to see the field come back to the condition it is in today. It seems fiscally irresponsible. He looks at the options with the grass field and sees the range of the options with advantages and disadvantages.

Councillor O'Malley asked questions about synthetic turf and asked if there was a way to do this but if in twenty five years could it be replace with natural grass if the City chose to Councillor Colon-Hayes asked about the field being saturated with water with footprints. She has gone to the parks around after rain and tested that out. She said if we were more suburban we would have more fields to be able to let some rest but we are not. The fact that because we are an urban community we need more grass and taking away some of our last parks with grass doesn't make sense to her. She appreciates what he is talking about but she has a completely different view on it.

Steve said there are different points of views. There are many urban communities migrating to synthetic fields for the reason there aren't enough grass fields for usage. There are many points of views and he respects her point of view.

Councillor Condon said he is concerned with the non-athlete more so than with the athletic individual. The varsity sports are not the ones that will suffer vs the kids that just want to participate. He doesn't want the children going out for recess to think we are not trying to give them good fields. He is concerned with what they are being told. He mentions Pearl Street Stadium is almost twelve years old and it looks like day one its tremendous. Those kids are lucky to play on these fields. The kids are all part of it keeping it clean. We get a deep vacuum twice a year spring and fall. You have to do maintenance even on a turf field. They test it every year to make sure there is nothing wrong with the field. They replace the infill if they have to fix it and have only done that once in twelve years. He doesn't want the kids to worry about what they are playing on. He wants to see turf on our fields to increase our programs so everyone can participate. Grass fields will not help the programs out there.

Councillor Simonelli made a comment by saying this thing has been going on for a long time, talking about playing fields and he wants to thank OSPCD and Steve O'Neil with their presentation and explaining things well. He has been going to the various fields and talking to athletic directors and there is a shortage of fields. He said it comes down to the maintenance of the fields. He has been appointed the Chair of Parks, Maintenance and Restoration this year and he has had a few meetings and the fact of the matter is the DPW Parks Department cannot keep up with more grass fields at the moment. We are moving forward to get them more equipment to maintain both of the fields. We said we were going to vote this paper out to the Full Council next week. To be fiscally and morally responsible we should move this paper out and be done.

Alex said on the maintenance piece there is no amount of money or employees we could bring to the DPW that will give our fields more time to rest. The number one factor or driver of the body of that field is how much time we put on that field and the use for restrictions after weather events that is the biggest driver.

Councillor McDonald asked Alex if he has a sense of the types of maintenance aspects that DPW can do that will have an impact on infill quality besides the rest

Alex said DPW does do alot of that already but the biggest factor is the rest of the field.

Ron did say that there is more money in this years budget that the DPW Director has requested for with irrigation and watering but it still remains you can't water and chemical your way out of this

Councillor Winslow said backfill material what is the cost for it

Steve said it would be clean fill. You don't need crushed stone functionally.

Councillor Spadafora agrees he believes the only option is going down deeper but he supports going down deeper it is better for the environment. He went through a similar exercise with Melrose they are going through a study with the Eli Pond Feasibility Study. They spent a considerable amount of money and similar to us it is a flood zone. The proposed project is to change the piece of grass in front of the high school to turf and the

west field will also be changed to turf. It talks about drainage and the amount of playing time. This debate is timely and very similar because it is wetlands with shortage of playing fields.

Councillor McDonald said one of the cost questions is the life plan of the turf. What is the cost of replacing the turf at the end of life, what is the additional cost to dispose of it when it is end of life.

Steve said at the time we were beginning discussions the estimating was about \$750,000. He does not have that broken down but the cost was in general not of any specific field to replace the carpet and disposal.

Councillor Hayes said she was hoping we can wait for the BOH's opinion on this. She does not think we should have environmental racism and punishing the kids at the Salemwood by putting plastic turf over there.

Alex said members of the Rec Dept. have addressed shortage of fields in previous conversations. We have had 14 public meetings on this project. Every year we wait the project costs go up. Alex said we are here because we believe that this is the best one there is room to disagree but delaying the project to us is the worst option. He also responded to environmental racism and punishing the kids. We can agree to disagree but we have been growing in time and the children's needs have been incorporated into this project.

We are here because we feel this is the best for our community from an outcome perspective but to say we are punishing the kids because of what whiter wealthier communities and whiter wealthier kids are getting is not true. We are not punishing the kids we are trying to support them.

Councillor Hayes said just because you are having public hearings doesn't mean you are coming to the right decision. She said she disagrees with him and there is environmental racism going on in the Salemwood area.

Councillor O'Malley feels that he sees on the horizon we may have to rip this up down the line so he requested that if we cant compromise on the grass now maybe we can compromise on the sub straight.

A motion was made by Councillor Linehan, seconded by Councillor at Large Colon Hayes, that the Order be returned without recommendation to the Full Council. A majority of the Finance Committee sought the Full Council's support for an estimate of a plan for a grass-based field, and for a field with a grass-compatible substate. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yea: 6 - McDonald, Councillor Condon, Councillor O'Malley, Councillor at Large Colon Hayes, Councillor Simonelli and Councillor Linehan

[140-23](#)

Order: That One Million Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,200,000) is appropriated to pay costs related to a change in scope of the Roosevelt Park Revitalization Project to excavate additional soils down to a level of three feet, including the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto, and to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with approval of the Mayor is authorized to borrow said amount under M.G.L. c. 44, s7(1) or any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefore

Sponsors: Carey McDonald

Attachments: [Final Paper: 140-23](#)[Mayor's Finance Follow Up Letter May 9 2023](#)[Mayor's Memo on Roosevelt Park 3 28 23](#)[Turf vs Grass May 9 2023](#)[Park Utilization Overview](#)[OSPCD Roosevelt finance presentation April 25 2023](#)

Councillor McDonald read Paper #140-23 into the record: Order: That One Million Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,200,000) is appropriated to pay costs related to a change in scope of the Roosevelt Park Revitalization Project to excavate additional soils down to a level of three feet, including the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto, and to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with approval of the Mayor is authorized to borrow said amount under M.G.L. c. 44, s7(1) or any other enabling authority, and to issue bonds or notes of the City therefore. He confirmed with Dan Grover, Treasurer his understanding from previous conversations is that the city is trying to find other funding sources but this would authorize the ability to go out and get the bid started on this construction project.

Motion was made to take Paper #140-23 off the table by Councillor Condon and seconded by Councillor Simonelli. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

A motion was made by Councillor Simonelli, seconded by Councillor Condon, that the Order be recommended favorably to the City Council. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Yea: 6 - McDonald, Councillor Condon, Councillor O'Malley, Councillor at Large Colon Hayes, Councillor Simonelli and Councillor Linehan

[167-23](#)

Minutes of April 11, 2023 to be approved.

[168-23](#)

Minutes of April 18, 2023 to be approved.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Councillor Simonelli, seconded by Councillor at Large Colon Hayes, that this meeting be adjourned at 7:05 PM. The motion carried unanimously.