

City Of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 18, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #107: LITTLE SIMPSON FIELD, SCOREBOARD, & PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM CONDITIONS

This budget memo is in response to Councilman Gaines inquiry about the condition of the field, scoreboard, and public address system at Little Simpson Baseball Field. Several members of the public have voiced concern about these issues.

First, the City had an electrician work on the Little Simpson scoreboard on April 10, 2008. A connector inside the scoreboard had stopped working sometime after the initial inspection at the start of the season. The new part has been ordered and should be installed within a week or so. This fix should have the scoreboard in operating condition.

The City has also purchased a new public address system for Little Simpson. Installation of the new speakers requires the use of a high lift truck, which the City has scheduled the use of. Barring unforeseen scheduling problems with the lift truck, the new system should be in place and operational within two weeks. Also, City staff has recently purchased protective tarps for home plate and the pitcher's mound. New "L" pitcher's screens are now available for practice. An additional batting cage is almost complete and should be available for use within a couple of weeks. The warning track around the field has been replaced. Finally, a higher level of field maintenance is planned for this season. This includes a mowing schedule of up to five times per week. Another issue of note at Little Simpson not specifically identified in this budget memo request is the lighting deficiency described in detail in Budget Memo #68.

Another issue with Little Simpson Field is one that has plagued many of the City's athletic fields. The condition of the turf is less than optimal due to overuse. City staff fertilized, seeded, and top-dressed the field this year before the season began. This treatment helps to some degree, but with continued overuse the field conditions will not improve and may actually decline. The Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities has proposed some ideas for consideration by the community that may help remedy the situation.

- Make Little Simpson a “game only” field. By removing all practices, the field will have more time to rest and recover from use. This would require the coordination of Alexandria Little League (ALL) District #4 and ALL District #9 for joint use of other fields for practice.
- Increase the number of lighted youth fields in the City. Some City fields, such as Ben Brenman, are underutilized due to time restrictions stemming from darkness. Lighting other fields could reduce use of Little Simpson and help field conditions. However, lighting additional fields requires neighborhood involvement in the planning process as well as significant new funding which the City has not planned.
- Identify a different location for “travel teams.” This use extends the baseball season and reduces the necessary off season recovery time for the field.
- Ensure that teams are more strictly respecting field closure times, including the necessary drying periods after rainfall. Playing on a field saturated by rain tears up the turf and can take three to four times longer to recover. City staff should make the call as to when a field is ready to play on, and the City’s professional judgment should be respected as it is in the best long term interests of the teams.