

Potential Use of \$300,000: Bradford Regional Park versus South Street Park

Background:

The 2008 Mecklenburg County park and recreation bond package included \$1.5 million for the planned community center to be developed in conjunction with the IB School renovation. County voters approved the bond package. When CMS the decision to close the IB School in Davidson, the planned project was terminated. \$1.2 million of the \$1.5 million was allocated for development of Abersham/Allison/Fisher park amenities. This funding was appropriated in the FY16 county budget, in conjunction with the dedicated greenway funding through the parcels. County staff have managed these projects and controlled the funding. The remaining \$300,000 was allocated to what we call South Street Park (land surrounding P&R offices. This funding was appropriated in the FY17 county budget. Town and county staff have not yet determined how the project will be managed.

Another project from the 2008 county bond package is \$3.1 million for athletic field improvements at Bradford Park. This funding was appropriated in the county FY16 budget. The project is envisioned to include: lighting and artificial turf over 3 existing natural grass, non-irrigated full size rectangular athletic fields suitable for soccer and a traffic light at the Ramah Church/Hwy 73 intersection.

Cost estimates have come in high. The current projected shortfall is between approximately \$1 million and \$1.3 million. The projected shortfall is primarily due to the need to use enhanced artificial turf materials (old standard is currently under federal review for safety)—this is an additional \$300,000 per field for total additional cost of \$900,000. It is my understanding that because this change could not have been foreseen, county staff are requesting additional Mecklenburg County funding. The bulk of the remaining shortfall is due to the cost of the NCDOT traffic signal at Ramah Church/Hwy 73 intersection. What was initially estimated to be \$100,000 has risen to \$350,000 for the intersection improvements.

Although the bulk of capital funding for development of Bradford Regional Park has come from Mecklenburg County, to date, the Town of Huntersville has contributed approximately \$1.3 million in capital while the Town of Davidson has not contributed any capital. Huntersville staff believe now is an opportunity for Davidson to change that and has urged Davidson to ask the county to reallocate the \$300,000 in FY17 to cover the active athletic field project shortfall.

As a reminder, Davidson and Huntersville partner in the operation of Bradford Regional Park. Because Huntersville covers 80% of the operating costs (Davidson covers the other 20%), Huntersville staff handle all scheduling and maintenance. Currently, Davidson reimburses Huntersville \$25,000 - \$30,000 annually for Davidson's 20% of the park's operating costs not recouped through user fees.

Unfortunately there are currently several crucial unknowns—including CMS plans for Davidson Elementary School expansion and the potential relocation of the town's Parks & Recreation Department—that make the South Street Park project problematic to pursue in the current fiscal year.