

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE CREATION OF A BASEBALL FIELD
AT KENT COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL
APRIL 28, 2014**

Mayor Cerino called the public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were councilmembers Linda C. Kuiper and Mauritz Stetson, W. S. Ingersoll, Town Manager, Jennifer Mulligan, Town Clerk, Bill Arrowood, Chairman of the Recreation Commission, and guests.

Mayor Cerino stated that the purpose of the public hearing was to solicit public input on a proposed baseball field at Kent County Middle School.

Mayor Cerino stated that the Town allowed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to the concept of building a baseball field on property owned by Kent County and governed by the Kent County Board of Education to go to the Board of Education for their approval. He said that there was a request from the Board of Education for a public hearing so that neighbors could comment on the proposal before any approvals were given.

Mayor Cerino stated that it was important to note that the Board of Education seemed to want to slow the pace of the project. He said that this was not a field that was going to be built imminently. Mayor Cerino stated that he thought this would happen in a more comprehensive manner, bringing several recreational amenities back to the campus.

Mayor Cerino asked Mr. Arrowood to give his presentation.

Mr. Arrowood stated that Chestertown was the only town in Kent County that did not have a baseball field. It was also one of the few incorporated towns on the Eastern Shore without a baseball field. He said that little league baseball and co-ed adult softball once thrived in Chestertown, but the fields have disappeared over time.

Mr. Arrowood stated that the Chestertown Recreation Commission was proposing to improve recreational activities in Town, one of which was baseball. He said that the ball fields at Kent County Middle School could be rebuilt into a multi-age field (10 to adult) as a showcase of baseball and softball for Chestertown and Kent County residents.

Mr. Arrowood stated that a home field for the Chestertown team would give the kids a sense of pride and belonging. He said that there was a significant sector of children in Chestertown that that did not have transportation to programs outside Town limits. He said that Worton was even too far for some of the kids to access.

Mr. Arrowood stated that historically the baseball fields were located on Campus Avenue, and at one time the Middle School site had 3 ball fields. He said that since the baseball program was moved to Worton, the fields fell into disrepair. Photos were shown of the existing fields today.

Mr. Arrowood stated that the field would be turned to face Campus Avenue, as the Victory Garden and outdoor classroom had been built in the last couple years. In this way, the sunset would not be in a batter's eyes.

Mr. Arrowood showed renderings of what the ball field would look like once built. He said that if the existing back stop was kept on site, a transparent screen could be installed and signs attached promoting Kent County Middle School.

Mr. Arrowood stated that the Recreation Commission was proposing a grass infield. He showed pictures of fields with grass infields and said the investment would make it a showcase, such as the National Little League fields. He said that weekly maintenance would be required whether it was a dirt infield or grass infield.

Mr. Arrowood went over the costs for the build of the ball field which were \$32,900.00. He broke down all of the costs. He said that the Town of Chestertown has already agreed to pay \$5,000.00 of the costs. He said that he was going to request \$2,500.00 from Kent County, and the rest would be done by grants and private donations from individuals and corporations. He said that they would also accept in-kind trade such from lumber companies, masons, etc.

Mr. Arrowood stated that the only request of the School Board was for maintenance by way of cutting the lawn during the school year and providing trash and recycling cans. He said that there was a provision in the MOU with the Mayor and Council for a seasonal staff person to maintain the field in the summer months. Any shortfalls would be the responsibility of the Recreation Commissions to fill through additional private funds.

Mr. Arrowood stated that all signage would be blue and gold to match the school colors.

Mr. Arrowood stated that the Recreation Commission was on stand-by to begin fundraising. He said that the Recreation Commission would also be responsible for scheduling the use of the field. He added that the Recreation Commission would like to have an in-house team to teach entry level baseball.

Mr. Arrowood stated that he estimated the build of the field would take about a week. He said that he would like to have cooperation from local contractors and businesses to make this a true home field, and would allow the children to help as well. He said that everyone who had a hand in this build would take ownership of the field and care for it over the years.

Mayor Cerino stated that he would like to limit comments to 5 minutes per speaker. He asked that everyone identify themselves before commenting.

Ms. Betsy Miller of Reed Court said that several neighbors expressed concern over traffic, sidewalks, lack of bathroom facilities, parking, trash and the upkeep of the field. She said that she appreciated that someone was going to be hired for maintenance. Ms. Miller stated that she did not understand starting a league in Town and only having one field. She suggested development at Garnett School and the Margo Bailey Park. Ms. Miller also asked if the outside fencing would remain, noting that the existing fence was not in good shape.

Mr. Arrowood stated that the fencing belonged to the School Board and as far as he was aware, it would remain.

Ms. Miller asked if lighting would be installed and if there was an adult league, how late the games would run.

Mr. Arrowood stated that no lighting would be added to the park and games would end at dusk. He said that the proposed budget did include a port-o-pot on site. Mr. Arrowood stated that any league would lose their permission to play on the property if they left trash on site.

Mr. Arrowood stated that the Margo Bailey Park was a long-time vision and they were looking at several options for that. He said that they chose the schoolyard because it was historically the site for baseball in Chestertown, but ultimately the Commission hoped that Bailey Park and the Kent County Middle School Ball Field had a “campus” feel to it.

Ms. Miller stated that a traffic study of Rolling Road was necessary because it was a shortcut to everywhere in Town.

Ms. Phyllis Lauro of East Campus Avenue stated that her major concern was that there seemed to be more things going on at the school lately, in the evenings, and parking took place all along Campus Avenue. She said that cars u-turned at the intersection of Campus Avenue and Barroll constantly.

Mr. Arrowood stated that based on the position of the field and the ultimate use after school, he thought people would want to park in the back of the School because it would be closer than parking on Campus Avenue. He said that he also anticipated walkers as some of the children playing would be from in-town.

Mr. Jeff Reed, School Board member, asked where the bulk of the children in Chestertown lived. He said that children from Coventry Farms and Washington Park would not be walking to the baseball field. Mr. Arrowood stated that there were children in the College Heights, Byford Heights, Cannon Street, Calvert Street, and High Street areas who could walk.

Mr. Stetson stated that when he moved to Chestertown the Middle School was the High School and a third of the students had cars. He said that he enjoys hearing kids playing and thought it would be nice to have activity at the field on the weekends.

Ms. Ellen Simmons of Reed Court stated that helicopters land on the tennis courts for transport to Shock Trauma and asked if that would continue if the ball field was constructed. Mayor Cerino stated that the hospital occasionally lands there but it was infrequent enough that there should not be a conflict. Mr. Arrowood stated that protocol could be put in place if there was an occasion for that to happen.

Mr. Bryan Williams, School Board member, stated that he agreed that Chestertown needed a baseball field, but he questioned some of Mr. Arrowood’s dimensions. He said that when the baseball field was built at the High School it took a lot of time to build it and it takes a lot of time to maintain. He thought the grass infield might be too much work, noting that it was much easier to maintain a dirt infield.

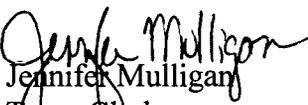
Mr. Williams stated that putting a new field in might help recruit kids, but there were fields open at Worton Park every night of the week. He said that Galena, Worton, and Rock Hall had teams. If Chestertown had a team they would need at least 18 kids to play, or they would have to join the County league. He said if the Chestertown kids couldn’t get to Worton, he did not know how they would be able to get to Galena or Rock Hall. He did say that he thought this would be a nice asset for the Middle School kids to play on but the project needed “tweaking”.

Mr. Jeff Nuse of Reed Court asked if this project would be in conjunction with the Kent County Baseball League or separate. Mr. Arrowood stated that they were trying to get the field right now, but Kent County Babe Ruth Baseball did say that they would like to have a team here. There would also be an in-house instructional league.

Mr. Nuse asked if the fee to play in the in-house league would be \$90.00, like it was in the County. Mr. Arrowood stated that in the league that he helps with, fees are based on sliding scale so that baseball was accessible to all. He said that there were already local businesses waiting to sponsor a team in Chestertown.

Mayor Cerino thanked everyone for coming and for their input. He restated that the timetable for building this field was not imminent and the public would be kept up to date on the process.

Mayor Cerino closed the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Submitted by: 
Jennifer Mulligan
Town Clerk

Approved by:
Chris Cerino
Mayor

**SIGN-IN SHEET
PUBLIC HEARING
BASEBALL FIELD AT KCMS
April 28, 2014**

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7.	Kees de Mooy	3 Rolling Rd	
8.	Jennifer " "	" "	
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