

1. Executive Summary

After recognizing that the quantity and quality of athletic fields and related facilities available for use by school athletic programs and local leagues was not sufficient to meet the needs of field user groups and the Philipstown community, the Philipstown Field Committee was formed to develop a comprehensive plan to improve them. The committee includes representatives from the Town of Philipstown Town Board and Recreation Department, Haldane Central and Garrison Union Free School Districts, and the Villages of Cold Spring and Nelsonville.

ATHLETIC FIELD USER GROUPS

Athletic fields in the community are currently used by Philipstown's Recreation Department, Haldane and Garrison schools physical education and athletic programs, and various youth sport groups including Philipstown Little League Baseball, Philipstown Hawks Pop Warner Football, Philipstown Soccer Club and Philipstown Lacrosse Association for Youth. According to information provided by the user groups, approximately 975 participants use the fields during the spring season, and 675 use them during the fall season.

The general consensus of the field user groups is that currently there are not enough fields for all of the groups that are competing for their use, and that the size and condition of the fields and amenities provided are not sufficient for them to run safe, competitive and effective programs. Common concerns included overuse of fields, uneven playing surfaces, turf and field drainage issues, down time after bad weather, overlapping fields, lack of bathrooms and adequate storage facilities, and limited parking.

Additional concerns relayed by all or some of the groups include the need for a running track and associated event areas, safe and sufficient spectator seating, concession facilities at key fields, access to water and electric service, irrigation to improve turf conditions, ADA access to fields and facilities and transportation of school teams to off-campus sites. They all agreed that incorporation of at least one community game field, preferably constructed of synthetic turf with the option for adding night lighting in the future, would be a great benefit to their programs and the entire community.

OVERVIEW OF ATHLETIC FIELDS IN PHILIPSTOWN

There are seven separate sites that contain athletic fields, and they are located throughout the western side of Philipstown at town and village parks, schools, fire department property and on privately-owned land

(see Athletic Fields Map). Generally, none of the fields and related facilities are ADA accessible or have irrigation systems, and the majority do not have adequate parking or storage facilities. Many of the field layouts overlap adjacent fields, making them difficult or unsafe to use at the same time, and are not in conformance with current guidelines that recommend safety buffers including setbacks to fences, dugouts and other structures.

Analysis of the overall system of fields shows that there actually is not a shortage of fields in Town. The perceived shortage is due to the fact that most of the fields were never developed to the quality and or dimensions required for competitive use. The space is available at existing field sites to address this issue and alleviate the situation.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING FIELDS

Philipstown Park, Town of Philipstown

The Town's fields are located at Philipstown Park and the Philipstown Community Center in Garrison. Philipstown Park contains two separate multi-purpose field areas that are used for youth games and practices, as well as a small practice field. Although the fields were constructed within the past 10 years, their surface is uneven and drainage is poor. The fields have no irrigation and are not large enough for varsity games. There are no restrooms or equipment storage facilities and not enough parking during the time of heaviest use in spring and fall.

Philipstown Community Center, Town of Philipstown

The Community Center property contains a large, L-shaped lawn area that has not been developed for competitive athletic use. The upper area adjacent to the water tower is level enough to use for recreational T-Ball and pre-school soccer.

Mayors Park, Village of Cold Spring

The Village of Cold Spring's fields are located at Mayors Park. The fenced in field area includes the only baseball field in town, a small softball field, a multi-purpose field that overlaps both outfields, and a basketball court. The field layout essentially limits use to one sport at a time. The baseball dugouts protrude into the field, the fields lacks irrigation, the surface is uneven and drainage is poor. The storage building floods and does not have adequate space.

Main Field, Haldane Central School District

Haldane Central School District has two separate field areas located on opposite sides of NYS Route 9D in Cold Spring. The main field area

contains a regulation size football field on a plateau above 2 tennis courts at street level. The field is not wide enough for varsity soccer games, has no irrigation and the turf is in poor condition. Other issues include the lack of a running track and restrooms as well as inadequate spectator bleachers, storage and concession facilities. The tennis court pavement has significant cracks and is in need of repair or reconstruction in the near future, and 2 courts are not sufficient for holding tennis meets.

9D Fields, Haldane Central School District

The 9D Fields, located on the opposite side of the road, contain a fenced softball field and a little league baseball field that is too small for regulation games. The little league field and other open areas are used for football and track & field practices. A tall screen structure that was erected to keep balls from leaving the field, as well as the majority of fencing on the little league field is in poor condition and should be a priority for repair or replacement. This field also lacks restrooms, irrigation and sufficient equipment storage facilities.

Garrison Field, Garrison Union Free School District

Garrison Union Free School District's field is located across 9D from the school. The field contains a softball field and a multi-purpose field that overlaps the softball outfield. The multi-purpose field is not large enough for varsity sports, and the layout essentially limits use to one sport at a time. There is currently a major drainage problem that leaves a large portion of the site underwater after precipitation. There is no irrigation, restrooms or equipment storage facilities on site. Although a small parking area has recently been installed, most users need to park at the school and cross 9D to get to the field, or at St. Philips Church.

North Highlands F.D. Athletic Ball Field, North Highlands Fire Department

The North Highlands Fire Department provides a little league baseball complex in North Highlands. There is a regulation little league baseball field and a small practice field. Although there are restroom, concession and storage facilities on site, there is no irrigation system or barrier-free access from the parking area to the fields and building.

Soccer Field, St. Basil's Academy

The only regulation size varsity soccer field in Town is located at St. Basil's Academy, on land not owned or controlled by any of the municipalities or school districts. Although there is no irrigation, this field is well drained and in better condition. Vehicular ingress, egress, circulation and lack of parking and pedestrian access to the field are the major issues that need to be addressed at this facility.

SITE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

Philipstown Park, Town of Philipstown

Improving and expanding existing fields at Philipstown Park is a priority of this plan, since an overall master plan for the park has already been established, and the field areas partially developed. The first phase should address the uneven field conditions, provide water service and irrigation, and begin the process of making the fields accessible. In subsequent phases, each of the field areas should be re-graded to improve drainage and their topsoil amended to support healthy turf growth. During this process, the back field should be expanded to at least 330' x 195' to allow for regulation soccer and lacrosse games. A comfort station, storage facility, expanded parking, pedestrian and maintenance access, children's playground and improved court games need to be part of the overall plan as proposed in an earlier study. Because of its location and existing infrastructure, it has been determined that this park is one of the best locations to locate a community game field, and this should be considered as the plans are advanced.

Philipstown Community Center, Town of Philipstown

The Community Center site provides the greatest opportunity to expand the number of competitive fields in town and should also be a priority. A master site plan for developing the open areas at the front of the site as athletic fields has already been prepared and implementation has been initiated. Recommended improvements to these areas include new 200-220' little league baseball and T-Ball fields on the northern field area, and a regulation size soccer multi-purpose field for soccer, lacrosse and football on the field adjacent to the water tower. This little league complex, which should be designed to also allow for softball, will replace the field recommended to be eliminated at Haldane 9D. Restrooms, storage, access paths, and other recommendations of the master plan need to be included as part of the improvements. Inclusion of a children's playground and tennis or multi-purpose courts should also be considered as the plans progress

Mayors Park, Village of Cold Spring

The athletic fields at Mayors Park need to be reorganized for more efficient use and upgraded to improve drainage, provide access and eliminate unsafe field conditions. The first phase should address the uneven field conditions, provide water service and irrigation, and begin the process of making the fields accessible. At the baseball field, the infield and perimeter fencing requires reconfiguration to eliminate dugout intrusion into the infield buffer area, and allow the option for multi-use (softball and little league). Skinning the entire infield for 90' base paths

would allow for all of these uses and reduce maintenance required on a grass infield. The multi-purpose field (soccer & football) should be realigned parallel to the railroad tracks to minimize overlap onto the infield area. This will require some expansion to the north. The existing softball diamond and basketball court area should be removed, as they conflict with the other uses inside the fenced area. Softball games can take place on the reconfigured baseball field and a new multi-purpose court on the north end of the park should be considered. The plan needs to include upgrading storage facilities, improving parking and access to fields from parking areas. A track around the perimeter of the field for walking or jogging was considered during development of the plan and could be considered.

Main Field, Haldane Central School District

This study has determined that, because of its location and existing infrastructure, the site of Haldane's main field is the best location for development of a community game field with perimeter running track. Expanding and upgrading the field to allow for regulation soccer as well as football will also alleviate some of the district's transportation issues. In order to get maximum use out of this field, conversion to a modern synthetic turf surface and incorporation of night lighting should be seriously considered early in the design process. The site analysis shows that the field can be expanded to 360' x 195', and include a non-regulation perimeter running track with areas for track & field jumping events. Recommended amenities include grandstands with press box, comfort stations and concession facilities that take advantage of the views toward the Hudson River, and are accessible from the campus, a storage building, scoreboard, and perimeter fencing for security. Several options for expansion of the tennis courts from 2 to 3, or possible relocation and conversion to parking have been considered. Expansion the existing stormwater basins will be required to control and manage additional runoff created by the project.

9D Fields, Haldane Central School District

At Haldane's 9D site, the fields need to be upgraded to meet current guidelines and regulations. Because of the constraints of the site, the lower field is too small for regulation little league baseball, which should be phased out and relocated to the Community Center. The existing ball screen structure, backstop, fencing, dugouts and support buildings should be removed and the site improved as a practice field. Recommended improvements include installation of a new 12' height perimeter fence along the top of the slope with extended netting at key locations for ball containment, and amendments to the topsoil to promote healthy turf growth. At the softball field, the infield and perimeter fencing requires

reconfiguration to provide the recommended infield buffer area. The reconfiguration should include improved and sheltered dugout areas, access paths from the parking area and street, and seating for spectators built into the existing slope. Additional recommendations include incorporating a small comfort station, improving the parking area, storage facilities and access to the lower field. The option of adding a new tennis/multi-purpose court to support the existing courts across 9D has also been considered during the planning process.

Garrison Field, Garrison Union Free School District

Before making any improvements to the Garrison fields, the source of the current drainage problem needs to be determined and eliminated. The drainage catch basins and pipes need to be cleaned out and televised to insure there are no breaks or blockages. If necessary, the existing system should be repaired and possibly expanded to handle runoff coming onto the field from 9D and the adjoining church parking lot. Once the drainage problem is alleviated, the fields should be upgraded to be in accordance with current guidelines and regulations. Recommended improvements include additional fencing at softball infield to protect players and spectators, expansion of multi-purpose field to 330' x 195' to allow for regulation games and take advantage of available space, provision of access paths from parking area and church parking, including existing steps, and parking area upgrades. Additionally, the analysis found that there is enough space adjacent to the existing playground to incorporate 3 tennis courts, and this option should be considered as the plans progress.

North Highlands F.D. Athletic Ball Field, North Highlands Fire Department

Because the North Highlands F.D. fields are in good condition and already have some of the important amenities that many of the other fields don't, improvements to this facility are not a high priority. However, providing access paths to the fields and facilities and improving the parking area for handicap access needs to be accomplished. New Little League Baseball requirements for expansion of fields to 220' need to be addressed, as well as extending nets above fencing at key locations to protect players and spectators. Incorporation of a practice batting cage, and children's playground, which is desired by field users should be considered during development of the planned improvements.

Soccer Field, St. Basil's Academy

The Athletic Fields Committee, school districts and municipalities should continue to work closely with representatives of St. Basil's Academy to address the issues of the site, especially access to the field. Improving vehicular and pedestrian ingress, egress, circulation and access should be

the priority. The addition of a small cul-de-sac at the northwestern corner of the field for handicap parking and access should be considered. The field itself is in satisfactory condition and, besides providing water service and irrigation, as well as implementation of the recommended annual maintenance plan, is not a priority for improvements. Analysis of the site determined that this is the only location where a regulation size track and field facility could fit without major clearing and earth moving.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOWN-WIDE FIELD IMPROVEMENTS

With the formation of their committee and completion of this plan, the Philipstown Field Committee has already taken the first major step in the process of improving the town-wide athletic field situation. The next step is to begin phased improvements to the existing fields to improve their playability, make them safe and accessible, provide needed support facilities, and bring them into conformance with current standards and regulations.

All of the recommended improvements to fields and facilities should be designed to incorporate and retain the town's unique character and authenticity as recommended in the Town's Comprehensive Plan, while integrating green and sustainable design and construction techniques whenever practicable. Recommended improvements that are necessary at all of the fields include implementation of an annual turf grass maintenance program, provision of water service and irrigation for natural turf fields, and ADA access to fields and facilities.

The availability and condition of fields throughout Philipstown will be greatly improved with the addition of competitive fields at the Philipstown Community Center site and incorporation of a community game field that can withstand heavy and extended use at Haldane High School or Philipstown Park. Upon implementation of the improvements recommended in this report, the community will have a sufficient amount of quality, competitive fields to meet their current needs. The plan should be reviewed every five years and adjusted to meet the changing needs of the public.