

Waverly Youth Ball Diamond Task Force Report

Presented: October 28, 2019

To: Mayor Soash & Waverly City Council Members

From: Ball Diamond Task Force

Jeremy Langner, Chair, Baseball Club Representative, Youth Coach and Parent Advocate of two sons

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Waverly City Staff: James Bronner, Garret Riordan and Mike Cherry

Council Liaison: Ann Rathe

Background:

Mayor Soash and the Waverly City Council approved the development of a ball diamond task force at the city council meeting on July 15, 2019. The task force was commissioned to find a solution for youth ball fields in the community of Waverly. This task force was asked to look at the needs and solutions for youth ball fields in the community.

The task force met on the following dates: July 22, August 4 & 18, September 9 & 23, October 7 & 21 to reach a conclusion to present to the city council on October 28, 2019. Each meeting was scheduled for 90 minutes. The task force used information from the 2007 report to support the findings in the current report. We have also provided updated information to support the 2007 findings. The information reported in 2007 task force minutes are still issues in 2019.

Our work would not be possible without access to city officials and city council members. The staff supported the task force with conceptual drawings, soil borings report, elevation and site preparation information. The chair provided updates to the council members via email during the process. The task force provided an update to council. The communication process has been supported to reach our final results.

Identified Obstacles:

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The task force acknowledges these obstacles in making a recommendation.

1. The need for a solution is documented back to 2001 when the city originally purchased the land north of the soccer complex for ball fields.
2. The 2007 task force made a joint recommendation to the city to move forward with an inclusive site for youth and adult ball leagues in partnership with the Bremer County Fair.
3. The current facilities have not been updated and still are inadequate for programming.

Recommendation:

The task force recommends to the city council to approve the development of the Cedar River Parkway location. The Cedar River Parkway location would be the primary location for programming. The site location would provide a total of eight fields for both baseball and softball. The fields would provide one field for 13U* baseball teams, 3 fields for 12U* baseball and 14U* softball and 3 fields for 10U* baseball and softball. The development of a Miracle Field would provide an opportunity for children with disabilities an opportunity to play games. The recreational programming would also be supported with three fields in Shell Rock. The total number of fields available for youth programming would be 11.

*10U refers to any player 10 years of age and under

*12U refers to any player 12 years of age and under

*13U refers to any player 13 years of age and under

*14U refers to any player 14 years of age and under

On September 9, 2019 the task force attended a council meeting to share a 5-0 task force vote to move forward with plans to consider the Cedar River Parkway location. The letter to council is attached at the end of the report. The determination of this location was finalized after being provided a conceptual drawing of the site by city officials. A site boring was done to determine the viability of the land. The site boring is attached at the end of the report.

Identification of Need:

The task force reviewed the data from the 2019 summer programming. The data included (14) Rec Softball Teams, (21) Rec Baseball Teams, (5) Travel Softball Teams, (9) Travel Baseball Teams. This number does not include the teams who are currently supported at the Shell Rock location which would include t-ball and little sluggers. The W-SR Baseball and Softball Club would plan on utilizing the Shell Rock fields for the same future programming.

Current use of ball fields:

Kiwanis Park (3 Fields)

- 10U field (baseball and softball)
- (2) 12U fields (baseball and softball)

Memorial Park (3 Fields)

- (3) 13 U fields (baseball & softball)

Current conditions of ball fields:

Both locations have multiple concerns for optimal and safe playing conditions. The 2007 report addressed several of these issues. The task force reinforced these issues with the following details.

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Kiwanis Park (3 Fields)

- Field 1 is in the best condition. It has adequate fencing for playing. The playing surface is in good condition.
- Field 2 has an infield playing surface in good condition. The outfield is not level and slopes away from the field.
- Field 3 is level for playing. It has covered dugouts. The fencing around home plate is inadequate.

The Kiwanis site is not a viable option for future programming due to the history of flooding. This site is impacted annually due to the river levels both pre and post dam upgrades in Waverly.

This site lacks any permanent restrooms as well as ADA accessibility of restrooms and concessions.

April 2019



March 2019

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Memorial Park (3 Fields)

- Field 1 (west end) has a level playing surface. The fencing needs to be replaced. It is not safe for players to sit in the dugout so close to home plate. The fencing has many different holes where a ball can get through behind home plate. There is not permanent fencing around the field to support play. The dugouts need to be upgraded.
- Field 2 (middle) has a level playing surface. The fencing needs to be replaced. It is not safe for players to sit in the dugout so close to home plate. The fencing has many different holes where a ball can get through behind home plate. There is not permanent fencing around the field to support play. The dugouts need to be upgraded.
- Field 3 (east) has a level playing surface. The fencing needs to be replaced. It is not safe for players to sit in the dugout so close to home plate. The fencing has many different holes where a ball can get through behind home plate. There is not permanent fencing around the field to support play. The dugouts need to be upgraded.

Here are photos to support our findings:

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The Memorial Park site is not a viable option for future programming due to the current safety issues and shared use of the site. The area is impacted by the number of different events taking place in a calendar year. It is shared with adult softball, Heritage Days, Cedar Valley Kennel Club Dog Show, Wartburg Intramurals, Youth Flag Football, Bremer County Fair and various community events.

On August 4, 2019 members of the task force, Ann Rathe and Garret Riordan toured the current field sites for programming. Council Member Rathe asked questions at each site and was able to see the current conditions of facilities.

Current capacity of ballfields:

The following is the number of players in baseball and softball programs during the past two years.

League	2018	2019
SR Tball & Sluggers	356	366
Youth Baseball	277	260
Youth Softball	147	154
Total	780	780

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All youth programs currently exist due to the partnerships between the City of Waverly and the City of Shell Rock. The 2007 report referenced the school system and Wartburg providing support to programming. These entities no longer have facilities that support our programming.

The number of players impacts the opportunity for teams to access fields. The teams are limited to practice one time a week prior to the season. When the season begins, there are little to no opportunities because of the game schedule. The W-SR Baseball and Softball Club provided an example of it's current schedule. The schedule reflects the use of Kiwanis Fields 1, 2 & 3. They are used from 4:30 to dark during the week in April and May. On the weekend teams use the fields from 7:30 am-6:00 pm.

Kiwanis Field 1, Kiwanis Field 2, Kiwanis Field 3							Apr 2019 (Central Time - Chicago)							
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
14	4:30pm - Elsamiller 4:30pm - Roling 6pm - FNB 2/3 BB 6pm - GBP 2/3 BB 6pm - Tro Sno 2/3	4:30pm - EBD 6/7 SB 6pm - Berkshire 6/7 6pm - EBD 4/5 SB 6pm - Roling Motors	4:30pm - Kaiser- 4:30pm - SSPI 4/5 4:30pm - WSR28BBB 6pm - DQ 4/5 BB 6pm - Elsamiller 6pm - WSR29BBB	4:30pm - DQ 2/3 SB 4:30pm - Pork Prod. 4:30pm - Root 2/3 6pm - Monarch 2/3 6pm - Peoples 2/3 6pm - Root 2/3 SB	4:30pm - Heartland 4:30pm - Pork Prod. 4:30pm - Waverly 6pm - 8U Gold 6pm - Baja Trucking 6pm - Bremer	7:30am - Deike 4/5 10:30am - Epley 12pm - Baja 4/5 BB 12pm - Mulder 4/5 3pm - SSPI 4/5 BB 4:30pm - Roling	21	4:30pm - WSR25GBB 6pm - E&B 2/3 BB 6pm - Elsamiller 6pm - WSR25GBB	Baseball Camp Baseball Camp 4:30pm - Elsamiller 6pm - Tro Sno 2/3	Baseball Camp Baseball Camp 4:30pm - EBD 6/7 SB 6pm - Berkshire 6/7	4:30pm - Kaiser- 4:30pm - SSPI 4/5 4:30pm - WSR28BBB 6pm - DQ 4/5 BB 6pm - Elsamiller 6pm - WSR29BBB	4:30pm - DQ 2/3 SB 4:30pm - Pork Prod. 4:30pm - Root 2/3 6pm - Monarch 2/3 6pm - Peoples 2/3 6pm - Root 2/3 SB	4:30pm - Heartland 4:30pm - Pork Prod. 4:30pm - Waverly 6pm - 4/5 SB Deery 6pm - Bremer	7:30am - Deike 4/5 10:30am - Epley 10:30am - WSR 28 12pm - Baja 4/5 BB 3pm - SSPI 4/5 BB 4:30pm - Roling
28	2pm - Mulder 4/5 BB 4pm - E&B 2/3 BB 4:30pm - 2-3 4:30pm - WSR25GBB 6pm - WSR26GBB 6pm - WSR29GBB	4:30pm - Elsamiller 4:30pm - Roling 6pm - FNB 2/3 BB 6pm - GBP 2/3BB 6pm - Tro Sno 2/3	4:30pm - 4/5 SB 4:30pm - 6/7 SB EBD 6pm - Berkshire 6/7 6pm - EBD 4/5 SB 6pm - Roling Motors	4:30pm - Kaiser- 4:30pm - SSPI 4/5 4:30pm - WSR29BBB 6pm - DQ 4/5 BB 6pm - Elsamiller	4:30pm - DQ 2/3 SB 4:30pm - Pork Prod. 4:30pm - Root 2/3 6pm - 2/3 SB 6pm - Monarch 2/3 6pm - Peoples 2/3	4:30pm - Heartland 4:30pm - Pork Prod. 4:30pm - Waverly 6pm - 4/5 SB Deery 6pm - Bremer	7:30am - Deike 4/5 9am - 4/5 SB Roling 10:30am - Epley 10:30am - Baja 4/5 BB 12pm - WSR 28 BBB 12pm - WSR26BBB 3pm - SSPI 4/5 BB 4:30pm - Roling	1	2	3	4			

The opportunity for youth players to practice on diamonds greatly impacts the overall player experience based on participation numbers.

Solutions:

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The recommendation to develop a dedicated youth site was determined with the following information.

1. Community Comparisons. The task force looked at similar communities with youth dedicated sites in communities across Iowa.

City	Youth Fields	Location
Bondurant	8	1 Site
Spencer	9	1 site
Storm Lake	6	2 sites
Harlan	6	1 Site
Carroll	7	1 Site
Grinnell	8	1 site
Williamsburg	6	1 Site
Independence	4	1 site
Nevada	6	1 site
Newton	6	1 site
Manchester	7	2-3 sites
Gilbert	5	1 site
Winterset	4	2 sites
Mason City	9	1 site
Center Point	4	1 site
North Liberty	8	1 site
Perry	7	1 site
Jefferson	6	2 sites
Ottumwa	7	1 site
Pella	8	1 site
Sioux Center	6	2 sites

2. Programming Priorities. The construction of fields would be focused on recreational programming. The recreational leagues are organized and managed by the Waverly-Shell Rock Baseball and Softball Clubs. The city supports the leagues with field maintenance and scheduling. The use of fields would be available to any program that plans to host youth tournaments in the community. The Waverly-Shell Rock Youth Baseball and Softball Club would plan to host multiple tournaments during the spring, summer and fall.
3. Miracle Field. The site would allow for players with disabilities the opportunity to play with their peers. There currently is no opportunities in the community for these players. The task force is

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aware of the field in Parkersburg that supports players. A field in Waverly would help with regional programming for families.

4. **Project Timeline.** The city staff has provided a timeline that supports the potential use of ball fields in 2021.

Items to Consider:

The Cedar River Parkway location has been questioned with the following concerns:

1. **Flooding.** The task force discussed flooding with city staff on multiple occasions. A large part of this site has been removed from the flood plain.
2. **Parking.** The current site plan would allow for families to park at the current site and/or soccer complex. The soccer organization could use the parking lot at the baseball/softball complex. This partnership allows for tournaments and reduces the need to use streets for parking. The task force also discussed how other organizations in the community do not have enough parking for major events. This would include Wartburg, school district, churches and city events. Our city streets occasionally do need to support parking for events.
3. **Funding.** The city would need to take the lead on this project. We recommend to council to consult with James Bronner, City Administrator, to discuss the projected construction costs. If any additional funding is needed it could be provided through a capital campaign after the city clarifies the budget. The City of Waverly holds a 501(c)3 through the Leisure Services Department that would allow private and public donations. There are opportunities for multiple grants and SRF (State Revolving Funds) available for this project. Mike Cherry, City Engineer, has advised the task force on these opportunities.

Location of Facility:

1. The city council voted on Resolution 19-147 (6-0), September 9, 2019, to allow the task force to work with city staff to move forward with the Cedar River Parkway location as the preferred site.
2. The task force was designed to address current youth programming needs. The primary site location at the Cedar River Parkway location allows for a youth focused site to meet the needs of our youth programs.
3. The proposed plan supports a Miracle Field. This allows all youth with disabilities to play.
4. The Cedar River Parkway location supports families who have children in both youth soccer and baseball/softball. In addition, it is accessible with city trails.
5. The city originally purchased this land for ballfields.
6. The task force only focused on city owned land. The task force discussed and agreed that the city trying to acquire another piece of land for programming would slow the process of development. The history of the Cedar River Parkway location in city council minutes supports the original purchase of this land for ballfields.
7. The Waverly-Shell Rock Baseball and Softball Club can host tournaments at this location. There would be an economic benefit to the community with tournaments. The current travel teams attend two day tournaments in other cities. The host site would bring families from multiple communities.

Summary:

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The need for youth baseball and softball fields has been documented on the agenda of the city since 2001. The need for ball fields has been an effort of volunteers, council members and city staff for the past 18 years. The need to improve the facilities in our community for youth are long overdue. The current facilities have seen minor to no upgrades. This task force has been allowed to include a new group of players to our youth programming with a Miracle Field. The access to all players improves the recreational experience for families in our community. There should no longer be a conversation about the need to complete build an improved facility for our youth. The decisions now are about producing a final product for our youth.

It is the preference of the task force that the city prioritizes the Cedar River Parkway ball diamond project. It has been stated in past councils youth fields are a priority of the city.

The task force is willing to serve as volunteers on a capital campaign. It's the task force's recommendation that the city of Waverly support the development of the land through excavation, drainage, infrastructure and essential vertical structures.

Recommendations for Next Steps:

Pending city council vote to move forward with the recommendation the task force suggests the following:

1. Allow the current task force to finalize a site plan with city staff. The hiring of engineering firms would be a responsibility of 2 task force members, 2 council members and 2 city staff. The task force is willing to support the phases needed to move forward with the current timeline established by city staff.
2. The task force is interested in partnering with the city to support future grant writing and funding opportunities. The city of Waverly has access to a 501(c)3 through the Northeast Iowa Community Foundation. The funds would be secure through the Leisure Services Department. The task force will communicate with all civic organizations on how they can support the project.

We appreciate the support of city staff, council and the mayor. Our youth and families in the community deserve action from the city and support from citizens to complete this project.

Submitted by the 2019 Ballfield Task Force Members