



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2022-037 – To amend Ord. No. 2021-042, adopted May 24, 2021, which accepted a program of proposed Capital Improvement Projects for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 and the four fiscal years thereafter, adopted a Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022, and determined a means of financing the same, by (i) establishing a new project for the Department of Public Works in the City Facility Maintenance & Improvements category called the “Diamond Maintenance” project and (ii) transferring funds in the amount of \$1,800,000.00 from the Capital Maintenance Reserve and appropriating such transferred funds to the Department of Public Works’ new Diamond Maintenance project in the City Facility Maintenance & Improvements category for the purpose of funding capital maintenance of the City’s baseball stadium known as the Diamond.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Department of Public Works
Date: February 22, 2022

PETITIONER

Bobby Vincent, Director, Department of Public Works

LOCATION

Richmond Diamond Ballpark, Greater Scotts Addition

PURPOSE

To amend Ord. No. 2021-042, adopted May 24, 2021, which adopted the Capital Improvement Plan for fiscal year 2022; and to request the City Council appropriate \$1,800,000 from the Capital Maintenance Reserve to the Facilities Capital Budget to support capital improvements to the Richmond Diamond Ballpark. Specifically, these required improvements would include replacement of the field lights, construction of a batting/pitching tunnel, required refurbishment to the visitor and home team locker rooms and structural repairs to the concrete structural roof beams.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

Minor League ballparks are subject to the same standards as Major League Baseball (MLB). During MLB’s tour of the Diamond, it was determined that field lights had reached their effective life cycle and could no longer provide the minimum foot candle capacity needed for safe use of the ballfield. The Department of Public Work’s contractor surveyed the lighting system and determined the entire system does not meet current or old MLB standards as the system has surpassed its expected life cycle of effectiveness.

After just two seasons of use (2019 and 2021), light levels depreciated by about 40% in the infield and 25% in the outfield even with the new lamps that were recently added on an outfield pole. After a relamp in December 2018, the Richmond Metropolitan Transportation Authority (RMTA) contractor was able to bring all lamps into working condition except for the Left Field C pole and the Third Base A pole. In June of 2019, RMTA’s contractor replaced 42 fixture outages. During

the contractor's recent site visit, they found another 42 fixtures out. On one pole the contractor observed corrosion on bolts and missing hardware. The poles were inspected by the contractor for structural integrity, and several cracks and rusting were observed that raised genuine concern.

The FY22 Facilities Capital Budget is already planned and does not include necessary improvements to the Diamond Ballpark. As such, an allocation from the Capital Maintenance Reserve to the Facilities Capital Budget, in the amount of \$1,800,000, is being requested.

The lease agreement between the City and the Flying Squirrels baseball team includes a bi-annual inspection to ensure that the structural integrity of the aging concrete facility is adequate. As in previous inspections, portions of the concrete roof support system were found to have concrete spalling and cracking that requires repair to maintain structural integrity. Additionally, MLB requires that each ball park under their control have an enclosed batting and hitting tunnel for each team's use. Only one such pitching/batting tunnel exists, so it is necessary to build a second tunnel in order to meet the requirement. During the MLB inspection of the Diamond facility it was determined that there were a number deviations in the home and visitor team's locker rooms, and that renovations would be necessary in order to maintain MLB's approval for the Diamond to remain as an authorized minor league facility.

This funding request will ensure continued safe operation of the Diamond Ball Park through meeting or exceeding all of the regulatory requirements of the MLB organization, which will allow the Diamond to remain as an authorized minor league facility.

City Administration recommends approval of this request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

SITE DESCRIPTION

Diamond Ballpark

PROPOSED USE FOR THE PROPERTY

Diamond Ballpark repairs and upgrades

MASTER PLAN

Richmond 300 establishes the Diamond Ball Park site as Destination Mixed Use.

Description: Key gateways featuring prominent destinations, such as retail, sports venues, and large employers, as well as housing and open space. Located at the convergence of several modes of transportation, including Pulse BRT or other planned transit improvements.

Development style: Higher density, transit-oriented development encouraged on vacant or underutilized sites. New development should be urban in form, may be of larger scale than existing context, and, where relevant, should pay special attention to the historic character of the existing context. Development should enhance the public realm and create a sense of place.

Many buildings are vertically mixed-use. Developments continue or introduce a gridded street pattern to increase connectivity.

Intensity: Buildings typically a minimum height of five stories.

Primary Uses: Retail/office/ personal service, multi-family residential, cultural, and open space.

Secondary Uses: Institutional and government.

This area is designated within the Richmond 300 Master Plan as the Scotts Addition National/Regional Node. This node establishes that “Scott’s Addition continues its evolution as a mixed-use neighborhood by adding more residential, office, entertainment, and "maker" uses. The area adds neighborhood amenities, such as a park or parklets, sidewalks, street trees, and other features that enhance the public realm. Scott's Addition is better connected to the West and North by new bridges and is served by high-frequency transit. W. Broad Street and Arthur Ashe Boulevard transform into a pair of high-quality urban avenues that are safe to cross, while becoming a destination in their own right for residential, office, retail and compatible entertainment uses.”

ZONING

The current zoning for this property is TOD-1 Transit Orientated Nodal District with B-7 Mixed Use Business District located to the east and west and further TOD-1 to the north and south of the subject property.

SURROUNDING AREA

Richmond 300 designates properties to the east and west as Industrial Mixed Use. Current surrounding land use includes industrial and auto-orientated commercial uses along with institutional facilities primarily related to active recreation. Redevelopment of the surrounding parcels is anticipated to be forthcoming and to include further institutional facilities related to active recreation and new commercial and residential developments.

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