

# Memo



To: Anthony Lyons, City Manager  
Via: Dan Hoffman, Assistant City Manager  
From: Steven R. Phillips, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Director  
Date: July 28, 2017  
Subject: Forest Park Improvements

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To prepare for a smooth transition of Forest Park to the City, staff from both the City and the County has been meeting for the past year discussing the need for field improvements to occur this summer before the transfer. Forest Park contains three (3) full sized soccer fields. These are all Bermuda 419 turf grass fields. The fields are used by the Gainesville Soccer League for practices and league play. They are heavily programmed and therefore show substantial signs of wear and abuse. This league has three (3) seasons per year in which they program practices and games.

The current maintenance services include regular mowing, aeration services, top dressing services, and herbicide applications for weed control, pest management and water management practices. The county agreed to herbicide, fertilize and aerate the fields as well as address worn turf areas and holes on the fields that posed safety issues and concerns with water retention. These improvements were committed to in meetings and conversations and emails. See attachments documenting these areas of concern noted by emails earlier this June again committing to making the needed improvements to the fields.

Each time inquiries were made the same answers were provided. County Parks Superintendent Vernest LeGree committed to Park Operations Manager John Weber that they would honor their commitment to getting the fields "in shape" before the City took over the management of the park. Mr. LeGree also committed to addressing the water retention issues and worn areas by committing to re-crowning one of the fields and patch sodding some of the overly worn areas and seeding some of the lesser concerning areas. He discussed how he would address specific weed species such as goose grass which is difficult to control.

As of July 31, 2017 this work had not been completed. The county identified issues with drought, rain, lack of man power and delays in equipment procurement as reasons for a lack of progress. The fields are still overrun with weeds, showing worn out areas where no turf is present, showing many issues with water retention and the holes that are safety concerns are still present.

There is a window of opportunity to manage improvements such as this and that window will be closing soon. The seasonal changes that are coming up in the fall do not offer good opportunity to complete the renovations as the county has planned. The city is not prepared to renovate the Forest Park fields and cannot maintain them at the level needed to provide quality services to the groups currently using the park.

The city solicited bids for maintenance services on the fields beginning October 1, 2017 and did not receive any bids back. One vendor was not prepared to perform this type of work; one stated they did not know the bid due date and the other said they would not submit a bid because the fields were not in maintainable condition.

Should the City accept the current condition of the fields, staff would have to: extensively herbicide to kill weeds; address drainage issues by adjusting the crown of the fields with top dressing and relieving compaction through aeration; then either re-sod or re-sprig all three fields next spring and summer. The approximate cost for these renovations next spring is approximately \$60,000 to \$80,000 for all three fields.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

XC: Michelle Park, Assistant Director  
John Weber, Park Operations Manager