

**Government of the District of Columbia**  
**ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G**

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Lafayette Field Resolution  
March 25, 2024

1. On February 26, 2024, the ANC submitted a [resolution concerning the Lafayette Field renovation](#). The resolution, after recounting the long history of promises made by the city to renovate and maintain the grass field, contained four specific requests. To wit:
  - a. ANC 3/4G insists that DGS post the plans on their website. The URL for the page below on the DPR modernization project could work: <https://dgs.dc.gov/page/lafayette-recreation-center-modernization>. Regardless of the specific publicly accessible website to which DGS chooses to post the plans, what is imperative is that all impacted stakeholders in the community have access to copies of the scope of work and specifications in the plans for Lafayette-Pointer Park grounds and Lafayette ES field within one week of the passage of this resolution.
  - b. The ANC requests that all relevant city agencies (incl. DGS, DPR, and DCPS) entrusted with the maintenance and rehabilitation of Lafayette Park grounds and school field appear before the ANC to answer any and all questions the community has.
  - c. ANC 3/4G insists that the city honor its 2016 commitment to a natural grass ballfield behind Lafayette, and that the city not use the results of its own poor construction and lack of maintenance as justification for renegeing on that commitment.
  - d. The ANC insists no rehabilitation occur before the impacted stakeholders in the community have had a meaningful opportunity to review and comment upon the plans, and that the comments of the Friends of Lafayette-Pointer Park, who have been vigilant in their observations and persistent in their efforts to have the responsible agencies correct shoddy work and conditions, be given great weight.

2. As indicated below in paragraph 8 (h), it does not appear that the city gave great weight to this resolution before finalizing their renovation of the upper field/installation of the bio-retention facilities and the restoration of the lower field plans.
3. On March 13, 2024, a meeting was held at Lafayette Elementary School with representatives of DGS and DCPS' capital project team in response to a direct request by the ANC in January 2024 in order to allow the community to review the water abatement and Lafayette field redevelopment plans. Representatives of the Mayor's Office of Community Relations (MOCR) and the Office of Councilmember Lewis-George were also present.
4. At this meeting, the city announced that it had developed a water erosion mitigation plan for the upper playground and field area. In a breach of commitments made to the ANC and Friends of Lafayette-Pointer Park (FOLP) this summer, this plan was created without input from the community and, in particular, FOLP, the official park partner that has been monitoring and reporting maintenance needs of the field over the last decade. The city proposed bio-retention cells. The city's contention was that if the cells were properly maintained, the cells could provide a viable solution to the erosion and related problems that have plagued this part of the park. However, many of the granular details were missing and the plan raised as many questions as it answered.
5. This said, overall, the objective of mitigating erosion and runoff from the upper field and playground was well received by the community members present.
6. The city announced that it had decided that the track surrounding the lower field would be made of either painted concrete or asphalt. No alternative surfaces or cost-analyses were presented regarding the various community and school uses of the track.
7. The city announced that it had reached a decision that it intended to install an artificial turf field at Lafayette. This decision violates promises made by the mayor, by DPS and the terms of and MOU between DCPS, DGS, and DPR from 2016 that provided:
  - a. The field material will be natural grass (DGS presentation to SIT, March 7, 2016) [https://dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dgs/publication/attachments/Lafayette%20School%20-%20SIT%20Meeting%20Presentation%20%28Mar%2007%202016%29%20\\_%20Compressed.pdf](https://dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dgs/publication/attachments/Lafayette%20School%20-%20SIT%20Meeting%20Presentation%20%28Mar%2007%202016%29%20_%20Compressed.pdf)
  - b. DPR will not alter, change, add to or improve the field. (MOU presented by DGS on October 26, 2016, during the SIT Presentation.) <https://dgs.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dgs/publication/attachments/Lafayette%20School%20->

8. The city endeavored to explain that the decision was made because it felt that artificial turf was in the best interests of the field. To say the presentation was unimpressive and unpersuasive would be a gross understatement. An artificial turf field was overwhelmingly rejected by the community members present for many substantive as well as process reasons including:
  - a. There had been no community engagement in the decision-making process. In essence, the city issued a proclamation.
  - b. The financials presented in support of the decision were incomplete. No side-by-side comparison of the costs of installation, maintenance, replacement, and disposal costs of an artificial turf versus a natural grass field were presented.
  - c. Upon questioning from the community, it became abundantly clear that the city had not done adequate due diligence on the health risks presented by artificial fields.
  - d. Upon questioning from the community, it became clear that the city was unaware of the details of the environmental litigation against manufacturers artificial turf products initiated by the Office of the Attorney General.
  - e. Upon questioning from the community, it became clear that the city was not aware how many days an artificial turf field would be unsafe for play because of retained heat. For example, Montgomery County Public Schools issue a caution in using artificial turf fields in temperatures over 80 degrees. On such days, activities are limited to early mornings and evenings. In 2023, using that measure, an artificial turf field would have been in this warning zone for 126 days.
  - f. Upon questioning by the community, it was essentially admitted that the city presently lacked the necessary equipment and wherewithal to maintain artificial turf fields. The city advised that it would endeavor to obtain the needed equipment as part of this requisition but could offer no assurances that the request would be fulfilled in the current budget environment or that they had the

adequate staff and properly trained personnel to perform the required maintenance.<sup>1</sup>

- g. It should be noted that despite Councilmember Lewis-George's having asked the city for close to a year to engage with the community before a decision was reached, and despite CA Donahue's express promise to Councilmember Lewis-George that he would ensure the community got the scope of work and community engagement<sup>2</sup> during his performance oversight hearing in February, See, (video here at 2:16:10 mark): [https://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=57&clip\\_id=8672](https://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=57&clip_id=8672), it became clear that the city had no intention to provide either the full scope of work or meaningful engagement because, in their minds, a decision to install an artificial turf field had already been made.
- h. In response, ANC Commissioner Zeldin asked if the city had given great weight to its February 26, 2024, resolution. The city acknowledged having received the resolution but was not clear as to what extent it had actually given great weight to the February resolution. Commissioner Zeldin asked that the city give great weight to that resolution.
- i. Commissioner Zeldin suggested that the city delay going forward with the upper field renovation/restoration until it has received more meaningful input from the community. He indicated that he is mindful of the present budget allocation for undertaking this work in this fiscal year and would not like to miss this appropriation.
- j. Commissioner Zeldin suggested a further delay of the installation of artificial turf on the lower field until the upper field work was complete and the city and FOLP

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<sup>1</sup> Without the required maintenance artificial turf field present heightened risks.

<sup>2</sup>CM Lewis George: Parents and residents near Lafayette Elementary School and Recreation Center are concerned that DPR and DGS may be about to install an artificial turf field. I've asked to see the scope of work and for DGS, DPR, and DCPS to hold meetings with the public to get their input, and yet those requests have been denied.

- CA Donahue: "I certainly am committed to making sure you have a scope and there's community engagement from those agencies. If I could just add 30 seconds on this issue, I don't believe there's been a final decision made. From my understanding in meeting myself with some of the field engineers, the tradeoff of natural grass is that even with drainage improvements, the 12-month use of the field, it's a very popular field as you know, it'll be impossible to have the field maintained, its integrity and its look and feel, over as long a term as a field typically does when it's closed for the winter or closed off for non-school purposes. So that's just the tradeoff – turf lasts longer, artificial turf lasts longer. Natural grass, even with improvements, will likely deteriorate in the course of 3-5 years, before there might be the capital budget to infuse it for a renewed surface. But to your specific question, yes, I'll make sure there's engagement with the community and there's transparency about what the two options are."

had had an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the stormwater runoff measures.

As part of this proposal, it was further suggested that, during this interim period, the city honor its commitment to restore and maintain the lower grass field.

**RESOLVED :**

1. The ANC requests that the renovation of the upper field be decoupled from the renovation of the lower field.
2. The ANC requests that the plans for renovation of the upper field and bioretention be provided to the ANC and FOLP for thorough review and feedback before any permitting and construction begins.
3. The ANC requests that grass on the lower field be restored this spring or summer, and that prior to laying new sod, the city ensure that the ground is properly prepared by a) removing existing grass, b) decompacting existing soil, c) providing new permeable soil appropriate for sports field drainage; d) verifying the functioning of the sprinkler system; and e) reviewing the timing of watering with the community to prevent over- or under-watering as has happened in the past.
4. The ANC requests that the existing drains be cleaned pending installation of the new bio-retention facilities.
5. The ANC requests that one year after the renovation of the upper field and installation of the bio-retention facilities and the restoration of the grass on the lower field (as per paragraph 3 above), the city engage the community to determine next steps.

The ANC requests that the city present additional options for the lower field track in addition to painted concrete and asphalt before any work commences.

**APPROVED** at a regular public meeting, notice of which was properly given and at which a and at which a quorum of seven ( ) of seven ( ) members were present on March 25, 2024 by a vote of ( ) yes, ( ) no, and ( ) abstentions.

Lisa R Gore, Chair

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Bruce Sherman, Secretary

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