

Staff Executive Summary & Analysis

The Sports Tourism Facility Expansion Study is attached for your review. Here is a brief recap of the study, recent Board direction related to sports tourism and staff actions.

The process:

Victus Advisors was selected through the RFP process to conduct an independent analysis of the County's sports tourism venues and sports marketing opportunities.

Victus Advisors assessed Lee County's sports community as well as regional and national sports tourism markets to identify opportunities and recommend upgraded or new facilities for increasing Lee County's market potential for amateur sports.

Victus Advisors conducted:

- In-person interviews in Lee County with 16 project stakeholders and focus groups with 18 sports community leaders.
- 25 telephone interviews with sports event organizers and operators locally, regionally and nationally.
- Online surveys with 341 parents, participants, coaches and other members of the amateur sports community in the Lee County area.

Topics included demand for new facilities, perceptions of Lee County's current amateur sports facilities, general attitude toward amateur sports in Lee County, and ideal features of amateur sports host cities and facilities.

The recommendations:

At this time, the study offers three recommendations:

No. 1: Player Development Complex considerations:

- Add lights to the existing five fields at the Player Development Complex.
- Expanding the Player Development Complex by adding three additional lighted adult baseball diamonds (creating eight lighted adult baseball diamonds in total).
- Adding additional (at least eight) lighted diamonds on nearby/adjacent land that could accommodate both softball and youth baseball.

No. 2: Additional sports complex considerations:

- Build a complex that includes eight tournament-caliber, lighted multi-purpose fields.
- The primary-use demand for these fields would be for soccer, but could also accommodate emerging sports such as lacrosse and rugby.

No. 3: Future indoor sports considerations:

- Develop a plan for indoor, tournament-caliber sports facilities to be used by sports such as basketball, volleyball, gymnastics and wrestling, all of which Lee County currently under serves.
- Design the facility to provide up to eight basketball courts, which could also convert to eight to 12 volleyball courts.
- Consider an aquatic center capable of hosting regional and national swim meets year round.
- Note: The study noted that indoor aquatic centers are among the most expensive amateur sports facilities to build and operate and it may be financially prudent instead to consider expansion options at the FGCU Aquatics Center.

Summary:

The study provided by Victus Advisors recommends a total of 19 new fields (three additional adult baseball fields, eight youth baseball/softball fields and eight multi-purpose fields).

In the FY15-16 budget, the Board approved use of tourist development tax dollars to expand the Player Development Complex (the former Red Sox minor league facility) to include four additional youth baseball/softball fields.

Since this approval, Lee County has entered into discussions with the City of Fort Myers to expand the Player Development Complex to include three adult fields and eight youth baseball/softball fields for a total of 11 fields.

Lee County is currently developing an agreement with the City of Fort Myers for a long-term lease that will allow for the construction of the 11 additional fields.

Applying the study:

Staff recently used the Sports Tourism Facility Expansion Study to review the Babcock prospective ball field complex concept. Based on the recommendations from the study (stated above; 19 new fields) and the fact that we are currently planning to add 11 fields at the Player Development Complex, no need exists to pursue developing a large sports complex on the possible Babcock donation.

Additionally, you will recall that each year since 2014, the Board has prioritized sports tourism development as a strategic initiative with the philosophy of expanding existing facilities. Building a complex with the potential 40 fields would most likely draws users to one site, while leaving existing facilities empty or infrequently used.

Final note:

This Sports Tourism Facility Expansion Study addresses short-term needs for baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse and other multipurpose field sports as well as possibilities for indoor sports. The long-term future needs (10-year outlook) for these same sports as well as non-traditional sports will be determined based on population growth, increased interest in Lee County's core sports and the competitive sports tourism landscape in Florida as well as input from Lee County's sports tourism stakeholders and entities.

See below:

Sports Tourism Initiative Timeline

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Sept. 19, 2014: Dave Harner and Jeff Mielke meet with Collier County's Chris O'Brien to discuss use of facilities for Perfect Game.

Oct. 9, 2014: Dave Harner and Jeff Mielke meet with Perfect Game's Ben and Andy Ford to discuss Perfect Game's expansion into other sports within Lee County.

Oct. 29, 2014: At its Strategic Planning Workshop, the Lee Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) develops Strategic Policy Initiatives, which include sports tourism.

Oct. 31, 2014: Dave Harner and Jeff Mielke have phone conference with Ben and Andy Ford to discuss Perfect Game's expansion into other sports within Lee County, as well as what future facility needs they may have.

Dec. 12, 2014: At regularly scheduled BoCC meeting, Board approves its Strategic Policy Initiatives for FY2014-2015.

Jan. 20, 2015: Dave Harner meets with Ben Ford to discuss future expansion of various types of sporting events within Lee County.

Feb. 12, 2015: Lee County Sports Development annual report for 2014 shows a 12% increase over 2013. Lee County hosted 113 amateur sports events bringing 158,194 sports visitors and \$63 million in direct spending to Lee County.

April 21, 2015: At the Capital Maintenance and Capital Improvement Plan Workshop, Board discusses the 5-Plex Player Development Complex expansion.

June 8, 2015: Dave Harner and Jeff Mielke conference call with Ben Ford from Perfect Game to discuss expansion of other sporting events within Lee County.

June 23, 2015: Dave Harner and Jeff Mielke host conference call with Ben Ford to discuss expansion of other sporting events within Lee County.

Aug. 7, 2015: Dave Harner and Jesse Lavender meet with Ben Ford to discuss short-term site usage for new events and long-term needs of Perfect Game.

Sept. 1, 2015: At the first public hearing for the FY 15/16 budget, Board approves the 5-Plex Player Development Complex expansion.

Sept. 15, 2015: At the second public hearing for the FY 15/16 budget, Board approves the 5-Plex Player Development Complex expansion.

Oct. 22, 2015: At its Strategic Planning Workshop, Board affirms Strategic Policy Initiatives.

Oct. 27, 2015: Roger Desjarlais and Dave Harner meet with Jerry, Betty and Ben Ford to discuss future growth of Perfect Game in Lee County.

Oct. 29, 2015: Dave Harner meets with Ben Ford and Kitson & Partners' John Hillman to discuss future athletic needs.

Dec.1, 2015: At regularly scheduled BoCC meeting, Board approves its FY15/16 Strategic Policy Initiatives.

Dec. 4, 2015: Dave Harner, Damon Grant and Dana Kasler meet with Fort Myers City Manager Saeed Kazemi to discuss the possible use of City land to expand the 5-Plex Player Development Complex.

Dec. 11, 2015: RFP for a Sports Tourism Study is advertised; it's opened on Jan. 1, 2016. The three responses are rejected due to higher-than-expected costs.

Dec 17, 2015: Dave Harner and Dave Loveland meet to discuss conceptual sports complex at Babcock with the following Kitson & Partners representatives: John Hillman, Tom Danahy, Gary Nelson, Russ Schropp and Debra Dremann.

Jan 20, 2016: Dave Harner hosts conference call with John Hillman to discuss conceptual sports complex at Babcock.

Jan 29, 2016: Roger Desjarlais and Dave Harner meet with Saeed Kazemi to discuss future expansion of the 5-Plex Player Development Complex.

Feb 8, 2016: Dave Harner and Dana Kasler meet with Ben Ford to discuss future facility needs.

Feb 26, 2016: Dave Harner has phone conference with Ben Ford to discuss the 5-Plex Player Development expansion.

Feb 29, 2016: Roger Desjarlais and Dave Harner meet with Saeed Kazemi to discuss future expansion of the 5-Plex Player Development Complex.

Mar 15, 2016: Commissioner Larry Kiker, Roger Desjarlais, Dave Harner, Russell Schropp and Syd Kitson meet to discuss conceptual sports complex at Babcock.

April 6, 2016: Roger Desjarlais and Dave Harner meet with Saeed Kazemi to discuss future expansion of the 5-Plex Player Development Complex.

April 8, 2016: Dave Harner and Jesse Lavender meet with Ben Ford to discuss usage for Perfect Game expansion.

April 11, 2016: Roger Desjarlais and Dave Harner go to Tallahassee at the request of Kitson & Partners to meet with FDOT Secretary Boxhold to discuss conceptual sports complex at Babcock.

April 14, 2016: Lee County Sports Development annual report for 2015 shows Lee County hosted 115 amateur sports events, bringing 148,073 sports visitors and \$61 million in direct spending to Lee County.

April 28, 2016: Dave Harner meets with Ben Ford about the 5-Plex Player Development expansion and possible complex at Babcock.

May 3, 2016: At regularly scheduled BoCC meeting, under Commissioner Items, the BoCC directs county management to talk to Kitson & Partners to vet the conceptual ball field idea.

May 10, 2016: Roger Desjarlais, Richard Wesch, Doug Meurer, and Dave Harner meet to discuss the Board's direction to vet the prospective ball field idea with Kitson & Partners' representatives Rick Severance, Erica Woods, Gary Nelson and Russell Schropp.

May 17, 2016: At a regularly scheduled BoCC meeting, under County Manager items, Roger Desjarlais reports that administration has met with Kitson & Partners and is waiting for response. Per Board direction, staff will continue to vet the conceptual ball field idea.

June 7, 2016: RFP for Sports Tourism Facility Study is advertised and opened on June 22, 2016. Evaluation committee meeting is held Aug. 11, 2016, at which Victus Advisors was ranked as the top vendor.

July 11, 2016: Dave Harner, Doug Meurer, Dave Loveland and other Community Development Department staff meets with Alex Crespo of Waldrop Engineering, Steve Leung of David Plummer, Laura Herrero of Johnson Engineering, and representatives of Kitson & Partners: Russell Schropp, Gary Nelson, Erica Woods to discuss large-scale comprehensive plan amendment and MPD rezoning. Note: This meeting was held in lieu of the requested Informal/Pre-Application meeting.

Aug. 17, 2016: Dave Harner, Jeff Mielke and Dana Kasler meet with Ben Ford to discuss Perfect Game development.

Sept. 23, 2016: Roger Desjarlais, Doug Meurer, Dave Harner meet with Russell Schropp to discuss conceptual sports complex at Babcock.

Sept. 29, 2016: Dave Harner meets with Ben Ford regarding the 5-Plex Player Development expansion and conceptual complex at Babcock.

Oct. 17, 2016: Victus Advisors holds project meeting with county staff to discuss the study's scope.

Nov. 9, 2016: Roger Desjarlais and Dave Harner meet with Saeed Kazemi to discuss future expansion of the 5-Plex Player Development Complex.

Dec 29, 2016: Roger Desjarlais and Dave Harner meet with Saeed Kazemi to discuss future expansion of the 5-Plex Player Development Complex.

Jan. 30, 2017: At its Strategic Planning Workshop, Board affirms its Strategic Policy Initiatives.

Feb 6, 2017: Lee County receives draft Sports Tourism Facility Expansion Study.

Feb. 21, 2017: At regularly scheduled BoCC meeting, Board approves Strategic Policy Priorities and Action Items from the Jan. 30 BoCC Strategic Priorities Workshop.

Feb. 28, 2017: Lee County Sports Development annual report for 2016 shows Lee County hosted 139 amateur sports events bringing 147,463 sports visitors and \$67 million in direct spending to Lee County.

April 3, 2017: Roger Desjarlais and Dave Harner meet with Ben Ford and Kitson & Partners representatives Russell Schropp, Gary Nelson, Al Dougherty and John Hillman to discuss preliminary findings from the Sports Tourism Facility Expansion Study and to inform the group that County Management will not be recommending the conceptual baseball/sports complex to the Board.

April 5, 2017: Lee County receives a second draft of the Sports Tourism Facility Expansion Study; staff requests additional information related to non-traditional sports and long-term future needs.