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ALLSTON BRIGHTON

## Meeting planned on controversial proposal for state to lease Daly Field in Brighton to private entity

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 26, 2013 03:19 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A community meeting is scheduled to be held next week on a controversial proposal to have the state lease Daly Field in Brighton to a private, nonprofit group and for Simmons College to renovate the run-down, 8.6-acre green space.

The proposal [has been criticized](#) because it allows the state to designate times when Simmons, Brighton High School, and the Allston-Brighton Little League would have the chance to use the site, a set-up some worry could severely restrict general public use. Others are concerned about potential environmental impacts to the Charles River waterfront property.

A [law signed](#) by Governor Deval Patrick in August allows, but does not require, the state Department of Conservation and Recreation to lease the field to the nonprofit Allston-Brighton Friends of Daly Field, which is led by a 15-member board of residents and city, state, and Simmons representatives.

S. J. Port, a spokeswoman for the state conservation and recreation department

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S.J. Port, a spokeswoman for the state conservation and recreation department, said Tuesday that the state has not leased the property and reiterated that the newly-signed law "is permissive, not determinat."

"The project is dependent on proposals received by DCR and public input we will seek on those proposals," she said.

Port said the state is not associated with the meeting planned for next week.

The meeting was organized by the Allston-Brighton Friends of Daly Field.

"As DCR said last year when the legislation was passed, DCR will begin its own public process once we have a proposal from Simmons College," Port wrote in an e-mail Tuesday. "DCR has not received any project proposal (draft or otherwise) from Simmons."

The friends' meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5 in the library at Brighton High School, according to an [e-mailed notice](#).

"The meeting is being held to provide community members an opportunity to hear more about the project, to ask questions and to provide feedback to members of the Friends of Daly Field," said an e-mail from Janet Fishstein, a member of the friends group and assistant vice president for administration at Simmons.

The friends organization also said in the notice that it plans to soon launch a website, [www.friendsofdalyfield.org](http://www.friendsofdalyfield.org), "where the community will be able to learn more about the project and stay up to date with the future activities of the Allston Brighton Friends of Daly Field."

"The website will also allow members of the community who cannot attend the March 5th meeting to submit questions or comments online," the notice said.

If the plan moves forward, Simmons would spend \$5 million to renovate the property to create a multi-purpose outdoor sports complex with two new synthetic fields, a running track, tennis courts, river path, lighting for the entire parcel and other amenities for athletes and spectators, officials said. The college would also give \$500,000 for restoration work along the Charles River in Watertown.

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The worn-down green space is flanked by river to the north and Nonantum Road to the south. It currently features space for softball and soccer. The rebuilt athletic complex would allow for uses including football, soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, rugby, softball, and tennis.

The lease would be for 20 years with an option for a 10-year extension and would allow the friends group to oversee the property. The newly-signed law stipulates that scheduling of the field's use would be controlled by the state's conservation and recreation department.

The law explicitly reserves full use of the site for Simmons from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. on weekdays from March to May and from mid-August to November.

Brighton High football would have the space reserved from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. on weekdays and on Friday nights from mid-August to November for its practices. The Allston-Brighton Little League would reserve weekdays from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. from May to July.

Saturdays would be shared by Simmons College and the local and abutting communities. Sundays would be reserved for local community use.

"The general public will continue to have access to the fields, even during these times, if not in use by the identified users," Senator William N. Brownsberger of Belmont, who sponsored the legislation, wrote on his website over the summer, adding that "the site would continue to remain open and accessible — no closed gates."

Some legislators have said that the field is currently underutilized. The state said that the field is in use about one-third of the time by permit holders and is also used often for pickup games, the Globe has reported. And those who use it said it is very popular with softball and soccer teams, among others.

"The biggest change for most people will be that the fields will be in good shape," Brownsberger wrote over the summer. "My personal expectation is that use of the fields by the general public will increase substantially as a result of this partnership."

Daly Field was once home to Brighton High School football. But due to deteriorating conditions, the team abandoned the space more than 20 years ago. Since then, the Bengals have used other sites, most recently White Stadium

at Franklin Park. But football team has not had a home field since it left Daly Field

The law signed by Gov. Patrick on Aug. 6 is part of Chapter 223 of the Acts of 2012. Before he signed it, the House voted 155-0 to pass the bill and the Senate voted 34-3 to approve.

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