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ALLSTON BRIGHTON, NEWTON, WATERTOWN

Nonprofit eyes fall 2013 start for \$5m renovation project at Daly Field in Brighton

Posted by Matt Rocheleau March 6, 2013 12:11 PM

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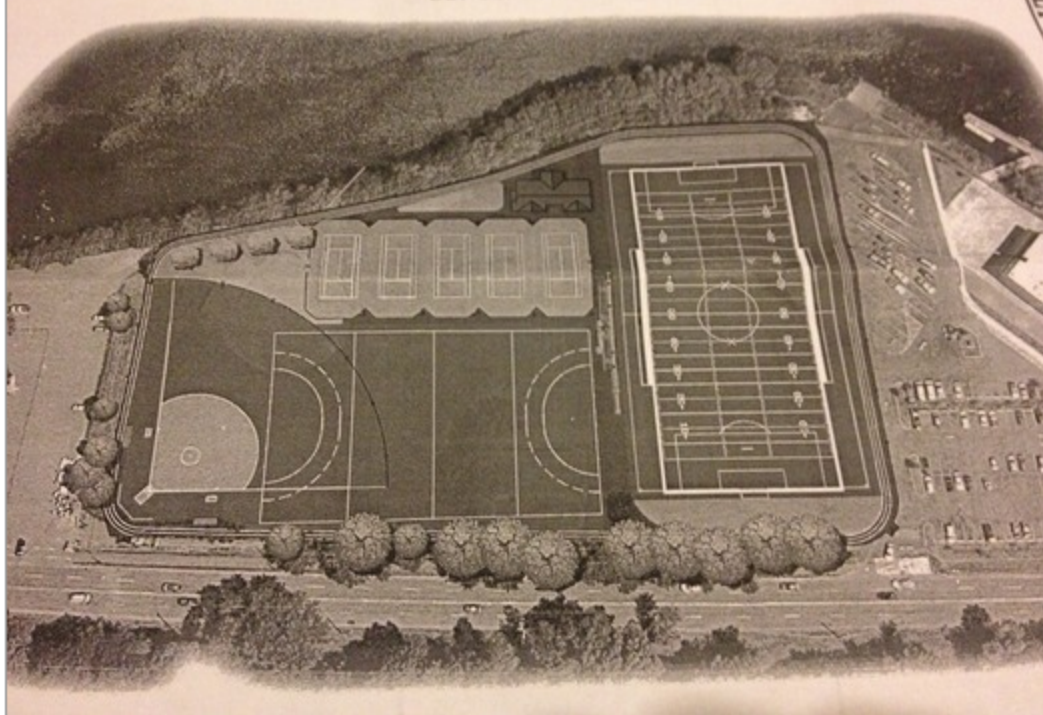


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DALY FIELD RENOVATION PROJECT
CONCEPT PLAN



(Allston-Brighton Friends of Daly Field)

Above is a photo handed out at Tuesday night's meeting. The flyer noted that the image is an overlay rendering for comparison purposes only. It is not an architectural or engineering document and is not to scale.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Leaders of the private, nonprofit Allston-Brighton Friends of Daly Field said Tuesday night they hope to start construction in the fall on a \$5 million project funded by Simmons College to renovate the Brighton field.

That proposal will only be possible if the field's owner, the state's Department of Conservation and Recreation, agrees to lease the run-down, 8.6-acre green space.

S.J. Port, a spokeswoman for the state conservation and recreation department, said last week that the department, while authorized by a newly-signed law, is not required to lease the property.

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

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Officials from the state's conservation and recreation department did not attend Tuesday's meeting at Brighton High School. The gathering was organized by the Allston-Brighton Friends of Daly Field, which is led by a 15-member board of residents and city, state, and Simmons representatives and launched a [website](#) this month.

"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 last week. "DCR has not received any project proposal (draft or otherwise) from Simmons."

The proposal to lease and renovate Daly Field to the nonprofit [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.

The friends organization also said in the notice that it plans to soon launch a [website](#),

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 friends group hopes the renovation would be complete by the spring of 2014.

The college would also give \$500,000 for restoration work along the Charles River in Watertown.

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.

At Tuesday's meeting the proposal received near unanimous support from those who spoke, including State Representative Kevin G. Honan, Jonathan Hecht and Michael J. Moran, who led the meeting; City Councilor Mark Ciommo; several residents; and teachers, administrators, coaches and student-athletes from Brighton High School.

Daly Field was once home to the high school's football team. 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

Jalen Apperwhite, the high school's quarterback, was among dozens of players who wore their jerseys to Tuesday's meeting, before leaving early to watch the school's basketball team defeat Melrose in the Division 2 North MIAA state tournament semifinal.

Where the football team practices now, "the field is not really laid out well," explained Apperwhite. "There's a bunch of ditches. I could be throwing a pass to one of my wide-outs and he'll run into a ditch and fall over."

He spoke about how the field's condition gets even worse after it rains and described how players at times have to share the field with geese.

"This project would be a blessing to the football team," he said.

Some concerns were expressed, including about not damaging the waterfront, ensuring the state receives fair compensation for the property and whether the

site would provide enough parking.

Moran said that Simmons and most other teams that would use the site would come by bus. For certain events, he suggested more parking might be available at offsite locations, where buses could shuttle people to and from the field.

"We'll just do the best we can," he said. "I think it's something that we can work out."

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