



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: David Gill, Parks and Recreation Director
DATE: May 5, 2025
SUBJECT: CIP52 Keach Park Athletic Field Light Project Update

Recommendation

Review report and determine if additional information is needed prior to final vote on the project.

History

Keach Park has been a park since the late 1930's and over the years has been renovated several times. The last full park renovation was in 2004, the work included new athletic fields with inground irrigation, new parking lot at end of Newton Ave, new basketball and tennis courts, picnic shelter, a formal entrance from Loudon Road and new fencing around the park. The inground irrigation system was the first installed in a city park. In addition to regular spring and fall sports during summer months the Parks and Recreation Department holds summer camps at the park.

Due to the growth of soccer the Parks and Recreation Department added a spring soccer program in 2011. Until 2016 these spring soccer leagues were clinic based and did not need a lined soccer field with goals. However, in 2016 a lined youth sized soccer field was added to help support our growing youth spring soccer leagues. This new field did not impact the spring sport fields of little league and softball. This new field was placed in opposite orientation as one of our fall soccer fields to ensure the new field would not affect field conditions for our fall soccer leagues. The new youth soccer field is set up first week of May and remains until Mid-July, in mid-July the soccer goals are removed and field is aerated and seeded. This allows the field to rest and recover prior to the start of our fall soccer leagues starting in late August.

The park today includes the following amenities:

- Outdoor swimming pool (since the late 1930's)
- Picnic Shelter with picnic tables
- Playground
- Little League Field and a Softball field
- One Div. 2 youth sized soccer field (early May – mid July)
- Two Div. 3 youth sized soccer fields (mid-August – end of October)

- Lighted basketball court and a lighted soccer mini pitch
- Perimeter walking trail (1/2 mile) with several benches

In 2016 the Parks and Recreation Director and the Assistant Director started to meet with Change for Concord Leadership to find ways to increase opportunities for programming and possible park improvements for Concord's growing new American community. Change for Concord advocated for the basketball and Tennis courts be repainted, additional porta toilet and trash containers. In the FY2018 budget City Council approved funds for the courts to be painted and the department added an extra trash can and porta toilet.

Due to the growth of soccer in the Keach Park neighborhood in late 2017 the Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee voted not to have staff schedule the new youth soccer field on Sundays and two evenings a week. This practice continues to this day except during two special events: one weekend for a large state-wide soccer tournament and for the past several years Keach Park has been home to the Multicultural Festival. During the summer months this new youth sized soccer field is also not reserved by groups after 5 pm Monday – Friday.

During the same time period Change for Concord started talking about the possibility of adding athletic field lights to Keach Park to support neighborhood soccer and to provide a safe place for residents to play during the darker late evening hours. During the FY2018 budget meetings Change for Concord presented a petition to City Council asking that athletic field lights be added to the park. During the FY2018 budget hearings City Council added as a placeholder athletic field lights in the out years of the Capital Improvement Plan for the park.

Change for Concord's Leadership changed when Lidia Yen was hired in 2021 to be the Lead Organizer for the organization. Just after she started her position City Councilor Byron Champlin, Mayor Pro Term Candance White Bouchard, Parks and Recreation staff David Gill and Laura Bryant met with Lidia to review her goals for the organization. During the meeting Lidia indicated her priority was offering workshops and trainings for the new Americans and not the field lights. During the next year she offered workshops with several of them being held at the City-Wide Community Center, topics included: College and Career Planning, Advisory Letter Writing, NH Peacekeeping Training and Foundations of Public Speaking.

As with many of the city's capital projects the athletic field lights over the years have been moved from year to year based on community needs and funding availability. The project was added during the FY19 budget season as a FY22 project, then in FY20 it was moved to FY2025, FY21 (COVID) moved to FY2029, FY22 kept at FY29, FY23 to FY32.

Fisto Ndayishimiye became Change for Concord Lead Organizer and AFSCS new grassroots organizer in the fall of 2022. Mr. Ndayishimiye indicated the Keach Park Lights were a priority for Change for Concord and not training and workshops for their members. During the next year and half, Change for Concord and new American residents held several rallies demanding the City approve the project.

With their outreach and advocacy, the project was included in the FY24 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and stated the following:

FY24 CIP51 Keach Park: Design and construction of lighting improvements for youth soccer field. Design: \$30,000. Construction: \$345,000 (excludes impact fee portion of 38,750). Simultaneously with design process, community meetings shall be conducted to review concepts, gather public input, as well as develop community consensus on a preferred design concept and usage plan for the lit field space. Public input meetings shall include the public, the City's Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee and Airport Advisory Committee, park users (including applicable leagues), abutting property owners, as well as community groups and other interested stakeholders. Construction is subject to City Council review and approval of preferred design concept and facility usage plan.

Discussion

H.L. Turner Group was selected to help with the design of the project, community meetings and permitting for the recommended lighting plan. Musco Lighting was chosen for the athletic field lights as they are one of the nation's leading athletic field lighting companies and they are used by many airports around the world. Their expertise with airport lighting requirements is required as the Keach Park project is in the flight path for planes using Concord Airport. In addition, Irish Electric was brought on board to assist with the electrical needs for the project.

January 11, 2024: Our first public meeting on the project was held on that date. Residents in attendance had a wide range of questions and concerns about the project from increased trash, noise, traffic concerns on Newton Ave and surrounding streets and possible changes to how the city handles the rentals of the city's other parks. Several times during the meeting there was a lack of understanding and respect of differing points of view.

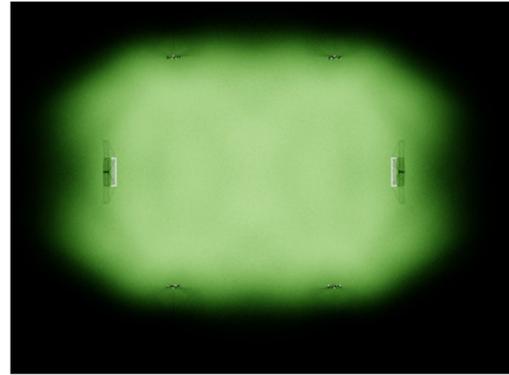
January 25, 2024: The project was reviewed with the Cities Airport Advisory Committee to review potential concerns with Airport Operations. Once a final plan has been designed they request staff come back to present the final plan for their approval. Once they approve the project will need to receive a permit from the FAA final approval.

Spring of 2024: New Hampshire Fish and Game reviewed the project to review any potential issues with wildlife in the area. Staff did mention the merlin falcon and owls in the park. However, no major wildlife concerns were identified

April 9, 2024: A neighborhood meeting was held with residents of Newton Ave, Pembroke Road and Exchange Ave to review traffic concerns as well as trash, noise and special event scheduling. During the meeting it was pointed out there is a cross walk from the sidewalk along Pembroke Road to Newton Ave however no sidewalk along Newton Ave to allow safe walking for residents to Keach Park. Deputy Police Chief John Thomas and Parks and Recreation Director David Gill were in attendance to review traffic issues, park complaints and special event scheduling.



Soccer Field Layout, yellow dots 70ft light towers



Field Light view, night sky compliant

December 12, 2024: A public meeting was held to review the process of scheduling of fields, additional maintenance needs, current parking limitations, new operating costs, new revenues from field rentals and projected costs for groups using athletic field lights. Those present also discussed the desire/need to see the park could support a lighted full-sized high school size field to allow potential use by all organizations in Concord. Ideally if built the new lighted field would be able to support the use of all sports not just a youth sized soccer field. Our youth sized soccer field is 220 ft by 130 ft (+/-). For comparison a High School regulation soccer field size ranges from 400 to 360 ft long and 150 to 240 feet wide.

The operations plan presented for the lighted youth field recommended the city continues to have Keach Park field users follow the department's scheduling and regular facility use procedures.

- All groups/individuals looking to reserve a park or field are required to fill out rental paperwork.
- If space is available all fees need to be paid within 72 hours of the permit being issued.
- Depending on size of the event the renter may be required to bring in additional porta toilets, handle trash removal etc. and at times pay for staff to be onsite during their event.
- If a league/renter needs to cancel their outdoor event due to weather conditions and/or poor field conditions, a full refund will be issued as long as the department was notified prior to the event starting.
- Additional information on scheduling recreation facilities are listed on our web site.
- We ask new leagues/events to contact us at least 6 months prior date to allow time to review request and determine there is no impact to existing users/leagues.

Benefits of Athletic Field Lights – can increase amount of time a field can be used.

Based on 2024 Sunset Times:

May 1: 7:48 pm	Lights can add up to 2.75 hours of daily use
June 1: 8:19 pm	Lights can add up to 2.25 hours of daily use
July 1: 8:29 pm	Lights can add up to 2 hours of daily use
August 1: 8:07 pm	Field is currently closed late July – late August – (to seed and aerate)
Sept 1: 7:20 pm	Lights can add up to 3 hours of daily use
October 1: 6:26 pm	Lights can add up to 4 hours of daily use
Nov 1: 5:37 pm	All city athletic fields typically are not scheduled after end of October.

- Assuming field lights are off at 10:30 pm, the park officially closes at 11 pm
- An additional 400+ hours of field use are possible by adding athletic field lights.
- Best practice is to keep scheduled field hours between 400 and 600 a year (as it is now), more hours of scheduled use will increase field damage and increases the chances of player injury.

Projected operating costs and revenue:

Estimated cost to operate lights (# days a month x the average hours a day x \$20 an hour light cost). Assumes lights are used every day with no rain outs/field closed, however weather will most likely affect fields being open six to seven times a month.

May: 31 days at 2.75 hrs. a day.	\$1,705
June: 30 days at 2.25 hrs. a day.	\$1,350
July: 19 days at 2 hrs. a day. (field is closed 7/20 – 8/17 annually)	\$950
August: 15 days at 2.5 hrs. a day.	\$750
September: 30 days at 3 hrs. day.	\$1,800
October: 31 days at 4 hrs. a day.	\$2,480



Total operating estimate expense for lights: \$9, 035

Increased maintenance costs for field with increased use:

- Extra aerating - equipment transport: \$750
- Staff Time (8 hours): \$320*
- Seed (5 bags of seed): \$750*
- Two additional Porta Toilets (May 1 – Nov 1) \$2,400
- Estimated new maintenance expense: \$4,220



Depending on field conditions may take more time and material to repair field.

By almost doubling the number of hours of field use (400+ hours of new annual use) the existing youth grass field may need more repair work than listed above that could result in the field being closed for 60 - 75 days to allow field be sodded to fully recover from overuse.

Park trash cans will be continued to be empty twice a week (Mondays and Fridays) with increased signs requesting carry in/out trash. Parks with trash cans are: Keach (2), Rolfe (2), White (5), Memorial Field (5) and Rollins Park (2). All other parks are posted carry/carry out parks.

Estimated New Revenue

(# days a month x average hours a day x \$27 an hour resident field rental rate x \$20 hour light fee)

May: 31 days at 2.75 hrs. a day.	\$4,006
June: 30 days at 2.25 hrs. a day.	\$3,172
July: 19 days at 2 hrs. a day.	\$1,786 (field is closed 7/20 – 8/17 annually)
August: 15 days at 2.5 hrs. a day.	\$1,762
September: 30 days at 3 hrs. day.	\$4,230
October: 31 days at 4 hrs. a day.	\$5,828
<u>Estimated new revenue:</u>	<u>\$20,784</u>

Assuming the field and lights are rented all available new times (no cancelations or days when field is closed, lights useable to 10:30 pm)

Total Operating Budget

Expenses

- Cost to run lights May 1 – Oct 31: \$9,350
- Increased maintenance costs: \$4,220
- Total estimated new expenses: \$13,570

Revenues

- Field rental and light fees: \$20,784

Assumptions:

- Regular hourly field rental and light fees will be charged for using the lighted athletic field.
- Budget reflects the field rented seven days week with no rain outs/field closed. Most likely there will be 5 – 8 days a month field will be closed due to poor field conditions with no field lights on.
- All regular field rental rules will be followed.
- One-point person per rental who is responsible for reserving the field, ensures all participants/players follow all park rules and to notify their group when/if field is closed by the city.
- Athletic field lights are not on if field is not scheduled/reserved for use.
- All regular park rules and regulations related to park/field use are followed.
- Operating income and expenses will be approved and appropriated in the fiscal year the field and lights will be ready for use. Could be partial funding depending on timing.

Unknowns:

- Who are the leagues/users who will be using the lighted field? What days of the week, times etc. Will the High School Teams be allowed to use the field with the lights during spring and fall sports seasons? If so are we charging for the use? Currently High School Teams do not use Keach Park Fields.
- Who is the league/event point person, and do they have the ability to pay fees, provide all paperwork in order, and have the ability to tell their teams/players field is closed.
- If no league or event is scheduled how do we handle having lights on or not, informing folks when field is closed etc. If lights are on with field unreserved who coordinates who is allowed to be on the field? i.e. one group shows up first and does not want others to take part.
- By almost doubling the scheduled use of the field how will it affect field conditions and playability.
- During summer months the youth soccer field is currently not reserved 5 – 8:30 pm Monday – Friday. With adding lights will more leagues and groups request use of the field between 5 and 8:30 pm when the lights come on? This may result in additional hours used, increased maintenance costs and possible new revenue. However, may also result in less field use by the neighborhood.
- How will increased park use impact already limited parking, trash, traffic and noise concerns brought up by park abutters.

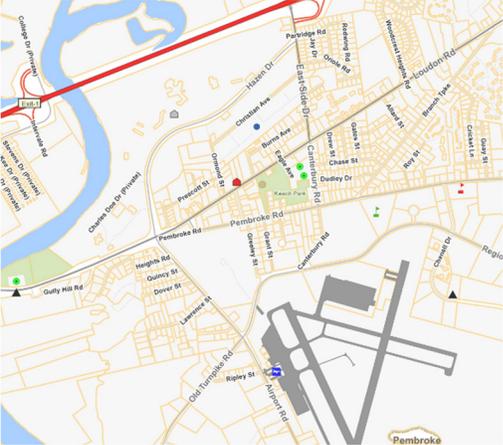
Construction Budget detail

• City Permits (City, FAA etc.)	\$10,000.00
• Electrical Work	\$60,000.00
• Lights and Light Towers	\$120,000.00
• Concrete Bases	\$27,000.00
• Site Work	\$60,000.00
<u>SUBTOTAL</u>	<u>\$277,000.00</u>
• Construction Manager (5%)	\$13,850.00
• Contingency (10%)	\$27,700.00
• Design and permitting	\$30,000.00
<u>Total Construction Estimate</u>	<u>\$348,550.00</u>

FY24 Funds available for the project is \$383,750

The Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee received an update of the project from H.L. Turner Group and the Parks and Recreation Director at their March 2025 meeting. At the meeting the committee voted without dissent not to move forward with the project. Their main concerns: negative impact to the grass soccer field at the park, potential for less neighborhood use of park, field size does not support all sports, limited amount of onsite parking and ability to follow the operations plan. They also discussed is this the best use of tax payer money when we have other parks projects that should be addressed prior to adding lights to Keach Park.

The Airport Advisory Committee at their April 2025 meeting voted to approve the lighting plan as it relates to airport operations as long as the proper FAA permit was received prior to construction. H.L. Turner Group is coordinating the FAA permit request on behalf of the city.



Keach Park in relationship to Concord Airport