So you want to own and build your own soccer complex: some tips and suggestions

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IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

From the movie “Field of Dreams”
BUYING THE LAND

• LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION
• Close to a major highway: easy access
• Environmental issues
• Water issues
• Zoning issues
• Soil issues (avoid ledge)
HOW MUCH LAND?

• As much as you can afford
• Each soccer field is approximately 2 acres.
• 1 acre of parking per field (110 spots per acre)
• Extra land for amenities, concessions, restrooms, picnic areas, tent areas
How Do We Finance the Project/Purchase?

- Problem for not-for-profits – no attachable assets – banks & other financing sources want things on which they can gain a security interest.
- Banks are limited on how much they can lend - based on property valuation.
  (generally 65 – 70 % of value)
How Do We Finance the Project / Purchase? continued

• Seek alternative forms of financing.
• Look into U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development Program. It’s a loan guarantee program for the bank that permits the bank to loan 95-100%.
• Look into tax-exempt bond financing.
Even if We Can Finance it, How Do We Actually Pay for it?

- Increased member dues
- Perhaps a special dues assessment
- Increased user fees
- Watch for the balance between field rental revenue and field maintenance costs
The Planning Phase

• How large is our property?
• How many soccer fields do we want?
• What amenities should we have?
• What is the budget. Have a general idea before you get involved with engineers and contractors (don’t forget contingency).
• What constraints do we face?
  • Legal
  • Environmental
  • Financial
Hire a Top-Notch Engineering Design Firm

• Prepare an RFP
  – Ensure it’s as detailed as possible.
  – Consider hiring someone to prepare a master plan.
  – Solicit bids.
  – Narrow the field.
  – Interview the finalists.
  – Conduct a thorough background investigation.
  – Make sure you are comfortable with the firm.
  – Negotiate the contract.
The Planning Process

• Give the engineer as much information as possible in the initial meetings.
• Ensure the engineer knows your critical issues.
• Set a time table.
• Have progress meetings at regular intervals.
• Make sure everyone signs off on the final plans.
Planning Process (continued)

• Prepare for the permitting phase of the process
  – Make sure of the filing deadlines.
  – Determine who will take the lead.
  – Determine the “hot button” issues.
  – Disclose as much as you can.
  – Be prepared to make some concessions but ensure you can live with, and up to, these concessions.
Selecting a Contractor

• The engineering firm will prepare the bid specifications.
• You can either put to bid selectively or in general, but have some idea who the top contractors are. The engineering firm should be helpful here.
• Establish a deadline.
• Have a meeting to which all interested bidders are invited and can ask questions.
• Unless you are covered by bid laws, open and review at your convenience.
Selecting the Contractor (continued)

- Narrow the field.
- Interview the prospective contractors.
- Go out and view their work.
- Talk to their references.
- Perhaps provide an opportunity for a final round of bidding.
- Select a contractor.
  - Timeliness – Track record with respect to completion of projects.
  - Quality – Does the contractor make an already well-designed project better?
  - Cost – original proposal and final project costs – are they below the engineer’s estimate, below competitors, and below your budget?
  - Managing Change. How does the contractor handle minor modifications? How do they negotiate fair and reasonable costs if significant changes are required?
  - Staying on the job. Do they stay until they finish, or leave mid job to begin another job
Selecting the Contractor (continued)

• Who will be on site daily?
• Negotiate the contract
  – Retainage
    • Watch out for reduction when 90-95% completion
  – Penalty clause if not done on specific date
  – Grass fields - grow-in period
  – Ask for a schedule of values once the contract is signed.
If Synthetic Fields are Part of the Project

• Decide whether to have a split contract – the contractor completes one portion and a separate contractor provides the synthetic turf.
  
  – Split contracts can offer savings, but also create major headaches with both contractors pointing fingers at one another.
Manage the Project

• Decide who will be Clerk of the Works. It is important for the owner to have a presence on site during the project.
• Have regular meetings with the contractor and the engineer – have an agenda for each meeting, and keep notes.
• Watch out for change orders – these can be budget busters.
Now That It’s Built, What Do We Do?

• Decide whether to maintain it yourself, or hire contractor
  – Items to consider
    • Capital investment required if we are going to maintain
    • Finding a fully competent staff – variety of skill sets necessary
    • Affording competent staff
    • Storage facilities for equipment & supplier
    • Proper licenses to handle various products
Now That It’s Built, What Do We Do?
(continued)

• Can we find a competent & affordable contractor?
• Will the contractor take same interest in the property that you have?
• Will there be consistency of staff?
• Can the contractor handle the irrigation maintenance? If not, who will do this?
Field Equipment

• Goals - How many? What sizes?
• Corner Flags
• Storm shelters
• Benches, Bleachers
• Water Stations
• Tents
• Trash Cans
• Golf carts & utility vehicle
• Public Address system
What about everything else?

- A map of the complex, with directions
- Rules for the complex
- Who is going to stripe the fields?
- How do we handle trash?
- How do we handle parking?
- How do we handle cleaning of restrooms?
- Concession stand & vending machines
- Who will handle general maintenance?
- Are we being environmentally friendly?
WHAT ABOUT SCHEDULING USE?

• How to manage scheduling events on the fields?
• What about tournaments?
• How do we set pricing?
• How do we control use so we don’t over-use natural grass fields?
Planning for Emergencies

• Medical personnel – do we provide or not?
• Should we have a defibrillator?
• We need a plan for severe weather – lightning. How do we clear the fields?
• Coordination with local police – when must we have paid police details?
• Who gets contacted in the event of an emergency or crisis situation?
Who is Responsible for Safety?

Remember – you are managing a public park

• How do we ensure that goals are properly secured?
• What about tents?
• Is someone inspecting fields for holes, depressions, etc.?
• Do we have other facilities, such as playgrounds? If so, who is inspecting?
• What do we do about a lost child?
What About Security?

• How do we keep the property secure?
• How do we keep vehicles from damaging our grass fields?
• If we have synthetic fields, how do we keep vehicles off these fields?
• Properly posting the property
• What about having vehicles towed?
• Be careful of erecting gates that could injure a trespasser.
Securing Sponsorships

• Place value on your assets
• Look for easy targets
• Prepare professional presentation (you only get one chance to make a first impression).
• Very little grant money is available.
• Generally, you will be competing for marketing dollars.
• Once you secure the agreement, give more than what is expected, particularly if this does not cost anything.
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