SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BASEBALL/CIVIC CENTER
August 5, 2025 at 5:15 PM

Chairman Morgan called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Morgan, Vincent, Kantor, Fajardo (late), Goonan

Messrs.: T. Fisher, T. Clougherty

1. Communication from Taylor Fisher, General Manager of the NH Fisher Cats, requesting funding in the amount of $150,000 for an emergency outfield replacement at Delta Dental Stadium.

Alderman Vincent stated Taylor thanks for coming tonight. This one item has brought a lot of talking points to a lot of people. After doing the research and talking to people, I do feel that there was a lot of misinformation out there and I am going to ask you some questions to try to clarify things so the public knows. I want to start by asking what the age of the field is currently.

Taylor Fisher, NH Fisher Cats General Manager, answered the outfield was last replaced about 10 years ago.

Alderman Vincent asked and what is the average life expectancy of a field of this type.

Mr. Fisher replied it depends on the number of events and use of the field but I would say seven years or maybe eight. In talking to other general managers, they say five to seven depending on the scale of events. Best case is seven years.

Alderman Vincent asked so we are due for a change.

Mr. Fisher responded yes.

Alderman Vincent asked why now. What makes this so pertinent?

Mr. Fisher answered major league baseball got involved is the shortest answer. About two weeks ago we had a nine game home stand. It started on a Friday and went through July 27. On Friday afternoon, our manager pulled me aside and said I can't quite figure it out but there seems to be something going on with the field. Come Saturday, the game was going on and we noticed that with just any human movement in the outfield, the turf was flipping over. There were no roots from the grass going into the soil. If you go to the field now, you will see that there are big sand spots where a lot of turf has flipped up and couldn't be replaced because it is not rooted into the ground. Ten years of wear and tear. There are surveys that go out after every home stand and coming into the final game of the series on July 27, our visiting team, Hartford who is the Rockies affiliate, notified major league baseball that our outfield was extremely dangerous; two of their coaching staff notified MLB. We were already aware of it because a week prior we had already started working to figure out how we were going to handle it but certainly once the MLB gets involved, it expedites the process quite a bit. We were already working on doing the outfield replacement at that time.

Alderman Vincent stated I want to make sure that it is understood that this is a contractual obligation that the city has with the Fisher Cats based on capital improvements. Can you tell the public what a capital improvement is? I know this counts as a capital improvement because it is a field and obviously the nature of what is pertinent there but can you also go into a little bit about the funding of it and maybe touch on the capital reserve fund and how that works? I think a big misunderstanding is that the capital reserve fund is city money when in fact it is not. It is 100% funded by the Fisher Cats and that is where you draw from for your projects.

Mr. Fisher replied regardless of how everything plays out, we are doing this project. We understand what needs to be done and are fortunate that our ownership group is willing to spend the $400,000 that the estimate is to do the project. It has to be done and it is starting on August 11 and will be done on August 25 when the team is on the road for two weeks. We will have an all new outfield and that will be good for let’s call it seven years. It will be a perfectly fantastic field from start to finish. To your point, how our lease is set up with the city is we pay lease payments and there are some city bonds that we pay but annually we pay over $1 million…this year we will be paying $1,065,000 to the city. $965,000 of that is made up of our rent and the debt payments towards the city bonds and then $100,000 goes into the capital reserve fund as you mentioned. The capital reserve fund is 100% our money that we pay into.

Alderman Vincent asked when do you pay into that.

Mr. Fisher answered we pay $25,000 per quarter into the fund. It is not a use it or lose it fund so if we do not fully exhaust all $100,000, it rolls over. We pay for everything and maintain the building so how the contract works is when large scale projects come up once the capital reserve fund is fully exhausted, we can then have a meeting like this and ask for a vote to split the overages.

Alderman Vincent responded I totally get that. Who approves you taking money out of the capital reserve fund? How does that process work?

Mr. Fisher replied early on this year we met with Finance and DPW to walk through what we had planned. Those are usually small scale projects that we use the money for. We have many projects that we have already completed and we have a couple of projects that are completed but we have not been reimbursed for yet. When this came to fruition, I realized that this was totally unexpected for everyone involved so what I did, outside of the two projects that we have completed that we still need to submit for reimbursement and one project in progress that we will need to be reimbursed for, I cancelled and pushed all other projects to maximize the amount of money in the capital reserve fund. I did a little math and will give you some round numbers. As it stands today, the outfield replacement project is just over $401,000. We have $117,628.86 in our capital reserve fund. Of that, if you take out the existing projects that we need reimbursement for, that leaves $98,212.36. If you deduct that from the current quote, that leaves $302,867.64. Just going with that 50/50 split, that is how we got to the $150,000 number. There are a couple of points I want to make. One is that it is a maximum request of $150,000. Ownership has fully offered to take on any overages and cost overruns related to the project because again this is an emergency. This is a true spirit of a partnership. We want to work together and minimize the costs coming out of the city's pocket. In the current example, the Fisher Cats would be spending just over $250,000 with $150,000 coming from the city. Just one more note on top of that, additionally over the last few days we have worked with Parks & Rec and DPW and a silver lining to this project is that the outfield constitutes 700 yards worth of topsoil and all of that is being donated to the city. We already have, and I don't know if anyone from DPW or Parks & Rec is here to speak to it, but my understanding is that all 700 years is already spoken for for projects in this city which would normally be a cost to the city as part of this.

Chairman Morgan asked Tim Clougherty to come forward. So we are going to save some money on that?

Mr. Fisher answered yes. We are working on a cost savings quote back from the company that we have contracted to do that. I was hoping I would have it by 5:15 PM today but this literally just happened at 10:30 AM yesterday when we found uses for all the material. Obviously, we want to make sure we are good partners with the city and to be able to put it to good use and to be able to save the city some money is a win-win.

Chairman Morgan stated Tim can you talk about the topsoil and the city potentially using some of it and saving some money on the overall project.

Tim Clougherty, Public Works Director, replied it is good product. This is a process that has been evolving over the past 48 hours. I haven't heard of any specific projects that it is going to be used for but we purchase loam and topsoil on a regular basis for either Parks projects or fixing the side of a road after winter conditions. We can use the product. We are going to haul it out and there will be some cost savings associated with that.

Chairman Morgan stated thank you, Taylor, for offering that to us.

Alderman Vincent stated this came up all of the sudden and I think it caused a lot of strife for a lot of people. What I think is important is communication and I am not questioning anybody's lack of or anything of that nature but we as the city know what is in the fund at all times because it is held by us. What would be helpful to the city would be long-term. I know you guys probably do this and I don't know if you do it now but is there a way you could say these projects are going to be taking place over the next six to twelve months and we are going to be tapping into the fund and we might need to come to the city for more money? Is that something we can work into being a communication tool? Are we already doing that?

Mr. Clougherty replied we are doing that.

Alderman Vincent asked so you are already in communications with them for long-term projects because you guys ultimately approve the use of the funds correct.

Mr. Clougherty responded we work in concert with the Solicitor's Office to make sure that the capital expenses that are being requested are eligible under the current agreement. The agreement does have a requirement for long-term capital planning. I met with Taylor five or six weeks ago and we talked about the necessity to replace the outfield. It was not we need to do it in three weeks five or six weeks ago. Taylor is very genuine in the fact that this is an emergency that came up and from what I heard in that meeting, I think things are different with this ownership group and I was very encouraged walking away. As you heard him testify, they are going to pay this $400,000 and I think that is a different tact than we have seen in the past. The Fisher Cats are here asking for reimbursement in accordance with the agreement. The field is going to get replaced.

Alderman Vincent stated it is important to echo that this is a contractual obligation by the city to pay this. We wish the timing was better.

Mr. Fisher stated I wish it wasn't August 11.

Alderman Vincent asked so tonight we are voting on the request but the amount could be less.

Chairman Morgan asked are there any other questions before we get to that. I would look for a motion to authorize payment not to exceed $150,000 towards the replacement of the outfield turf.

Alderman Vincent asked when are we going to know the number.

Chairman Morgan responded we will know by our next meeting. We will have another meeting in September.

*On motion of **Chairman Morgan**, duly seconded by **Alderman Vincent**, it was voted to authorize payment not to exceed $150,000 for the outfield replacement per the terms of the contract between the city and the Fisher Cats.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Vincent**, duly seconded by **Alderman Kantor**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

Matthew Normand

City Clerk