

Proposed sports park will bring diversity to Edwardsville recreation system

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – **Edwardsville** is well known as a sporting community in the Metro East area.

One of Edwardsville's ongoing projects is the development of a community sports park which would be located on Goshen Road near Interstate 55, down the road from the **Edwardsville YMCA** facility on Goshen Road. A community forum was held Wednesday night in the Edwardsville City Council chambers that provided information from the design firm of Crawford Murphy & Tilly Inc. on how the company would develop the proposed park.

The proposed park would include facilities for baseball, softball, soccer and pickleball, a game that combines elements of tennis, badminton and table tennis.

“I thought it was an excellent meeting,” said **Edwardsville Parks and Recreation Director Bob Pfeiffer**. “I thought the presentation (from CMT) went really well. We've been in discussions, on this subject, for over a year; we've had focus-group meetings, we formed a focus group for the sports park in particular and I think we've had three or four meetings with the focus group and then we started doing some in-house work to complement what they put together.

“I think introduced three initiatives for the city and this is one of the three initiatives; in looking at those three initiatives, the lack of fields for active recreational sports is one of our biggest needs in the community.”

The growth of the Edwardsville area has created the need for the sports park, Pfeiffer said. “I think we grew faster than maybe was anticipated,” Pfeiffer said, “and the property that's needed for a sports park is a large area and it comes at a pretty high price.

“First, I want to make sure we have practice and game space for the teams that are actually within Edwardsville; right now, we have a large number of teams that have to travel all over the area to even play any games, so we want to fulfill that local need first, and then if there are opportunities for us to provide additional weekend tournaments for more of a regional approach, that's what we'll look at next.

“I think we've got a good start with this focus group we've formed and with this design team, I think they're going to be able to put together some design ideas. We've been in contact with various groups, organizations, corporations and individuals; we look to all of those folks to help support the project.”

“We felt we had a lot of good questions (regarding the proposal),” Patton said, “and a lot of good answers from the professionals (who helped with the presentation); we learned about turf solutions, we learned about different demographics, how they go out and look to determine what field space is needed, based on the participation of local sports teams.”

In a best-case scenario, the park would be open for play by 2018, Patton said. “There's a lot of different design things that go into this, obviously we'll have to bid it out, construction time and then the turf-growth time; it appears from the numbers I've seen that we're not going to be able to put everything in synthetic (turf) and beyond it immediately – we're going to be looking at turf fields, at least most of them, for a period of time, but this is a great meeting to start educating the aldermen and the public about the potential for the space, and we're thrilled to have 70 acres (for the facility).”

The idea came about after a city-commissioned survey of Edwardsville residents seeking input about what citizens saw as the city's recreational needs. “We asked them 'what recreational needs do you see the city needing?',” Patton said. “'What would you like to see in the city of Edwardsville?', and the No. 1 choice was a play park. There were a lot of votes for a swimming pool space; we thought a lot about hockey and an area for ice hockey, which is a growing sport in the community.

“No. 2 behind the play park was athletic fields; we have a lot of softball players, we have a lot of soccer players, football, tennis, pickleball and baseball. We're a growing community, we think we need this amenity. The statistics here tonight show we have a higher participation in sports than many other areas in the United States. That's a good thing as parents get involved with their kids' sports and their kids' lives, that's a great bonding thing and a great way to grow and develop your children.”

Patton sees the establishment of the facility as a progressive move for Edwardsville to continue its growth. “It's a progressive move for us,” Patton said “We're working first and foremost on our public-safety facilities and getting those accomplished and doing that well within defined costs and, financially, what we can afford; we're taking the same approach to this park.”

