THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

**STAFF REPORT**

**Council Meeting Date:** March 14, 2023

**Subject:** McCormick Field Renovation & Improvements

**Staff Resources:** Chris Corl, General Manager HCCA

**Action Requested:** Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to sign a funding letter of commitment addressed to Major League Baseball regarding the City's intent to bring McCormick Field into compliance with new Professional Development League facility standards.

**Background**:

- The City of Asheville has owned the property located at 30 Buchanan Place, known as McCormick Field, for 89 of the past 100 years with exception being 1984 - 2005 while the property was owned by Buncombe County government.
- The majority of these years, the stadium has housed a Major League Baseball (MLB) affiliated minor league team.
- The economic Impact of the Asheville Tourists baseball team is very positive for local business at $9.8 Million annually to Buncombe County.
- Having the team downtown contributes to the continued revitalization of the South Slope district, making additional walkable options for pre and post game food and beverage customers for downtown businesses.
- In 2020, MLB issued new 'Facility Standards' requirements for their Professional Development League (PDL) team facilities, formerly known as the Minor League.
- These requirements must be met by April 1, 2023.
- McCormick Field does not meet these standards.
- In 2020, MLB issued license agreements with team owners of the 120 remaining PDL teams, Asheville's license is owned by DeWine Seeds - Silver Dollar Baseball LLC.
- If standards are not met, MLB reserves the right to revoke the affiliation license, effectively relocating the team to another market.
- The team and City staff have negotiated with MLB, allowing for the City to simply commit to funding upgrades to meet MLB facility standards by April 1, 2023.
- This will allow the affiliation license to remain with Asheville over the next two years while a renovation project is completed to upgrade the facility.
- In January 2010, the current owner of the team, DeWine Seeds - Silver Dollar Baseball LLC, was assigned the existing lease by the previous team owner.
- That lease has been extended four times by amendments and is now set to expire on December 31, 2023.
- DeWine Seeds - Silver Dollar Baseball LLC, has agreed to new lease terms associated with the commitment to bring McCormick Field into compliance with Major League Baseball standards.
- A new lease will void the current lease with a term commencing on the date of execution of the lease.
- Staff has communicated with the surrounding neighborhoods and feels that plans and operations can be set in place to alleviate concerns in regards to parking, noise and cleanliness surrounding baseball and non-baseball events at McCormick Field.

- The team has agreed to manage parking operations for all events held at McCormick Field, baseball and non-baseball, additionally the team is in conversations with City staff on the topic of managing parking operations at Memorial Stadium on behalf of the City.
- The team has agreed to revoke their request for additional fireworks nights and will continue to comply with the current Noise Ordinance which allows for 12 shows per year, plus celebrations of Federal Holidays, and amends the request to shoot fireworks on back to back nights to apply only on July 4th weekend, when July 4th falls on a Saturday. This would apply in 2026, 2037 & 2043.
- A separate resolution will be requested, approving the final lease terms and length in the summer of 2023.

**Council Goal(s):**
- Thriving Local Economy
- Well Planned & Livable City

**Committee(s)**:
- None

**Pro(s):**
- DeWine Seeds-Silver Dollar Baseball, LLC is committed to keeping minor league baseball in Asheville for the next 22 or more.
- A new lease will commit the team to lease payments of $450,000 per year or greater for twenty years.
- A new lease will commit the team to invest a minimum of $75,000 per year for twenty years in capital improvements to the facility.
- The presence of the Tourists team has a positive economic impact on the local economy
- A renovated facility will be a multi-purpose facility hosting more events than Tourists baseball games.

**Con(s):**
- Under the currently proposed plan, which includes funding from partner organizations, a renovation to the facility and associated debt service payments will potentially cost the City up to $1,000,000 per year for 20 years.
- Additional events at the facility will have additional impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.
- This project was not previously planned in the City's Capital Improvement Program.

**Fiscal Impact**:
- The current funding plan for this project would potentially require the City to commit up to $1,000,000 per year for 20 years to the capital program.

**Suggested Motion:**
- Motion to approve a resolution authorizing the City Manager to sign a funding letter of commitment addressed to Major League Baseball regarding the City's intent to bring McCormick Field into compliance with new Player Development League facility standards.

**Attachments:**
- Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 23-_____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO SIGN A FUNDING LETTER OF COMMITMENT TO MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL REGARDING THE CITY'S INTENT TO BRING MCCORMICK FIELD INTO COMPLIANCE WITH NEW PLAYER DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE FACILITY STANDARDS

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WHEREAS, pursuant N. C. Gen. Stat. 160A-11 and 160A-16 the City has general authority to enter into contracts and agreements; and

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville is the owner of real property located on Buchanan Place identified as PIN #96484785660000 and known as McCormick Field; and

WHEREAS, the conditions of McCormick Field do not meet current Major League Baseball standards; and

WHEREAS, after a renovation of the facility McCormick Field will meet current Major League Baseball standards ; and

WHEREAS, the total anticipated cost for the McCormick Field renovation is $37,500,000; and

WHEREAS, the City's total share of the renovation cost is anticipated to be $19,000,000;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is hereby authorized to sign a funding letter of commitment to Major League baseball regarding the City's intent to bring McCormick Field into compliance with new player development league facility standards.

Read, approved and adopted this 14th day of March 2023.

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City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney