



# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Jestin D. Johnson  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Fred Kelley  
Director, OPRYD

**SUBJECT:** Raimondi Park Ballfield License  
Agreement to Oakland Ballers

**DATE:** March 27, 2024

City Administrator Approval

  
Jestin Johnson (Apr 4, 2024 19:02 EDT)

Date: Apr 4, 2024

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt:**

**An Ordinance (1) Authorizing The City Administrator To Negotiate And Execute 1-Year License Agreements With The Oakland Ballers, A Minor League Baseball Team, For Use Of (A) The Raimondi Park Baseball Field At A Rate Of Five Hundred Seventy Dollars (\$570) Per Month In Exchange For Approximately \$1.6 Million Dollars (\$1,600,000) Of Improvements And (B) 1707 Wood Street For Special Event Parking At A Rate Of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) Per Month; (2) Making Findings That The License For Below Fair Market Value Is In The Best Interest Of The City; And (3) Making Appropriate California Environmental Quality Act Findings; and**

**A Resolution (2) Awarding A Professional Services Agreement To The Oakland Ballers, A Professional Baseball Team, To Manage The Removal Of Contaminated Soil Stockpiles At 1707 Wood Street For The Term April 16, 2024 To September 1, 2024, In An Amount Not To Exceed Eight Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$850,000); (2) Waiving The City's Competitive Process And Local/Small Local Business Enterprise (L/SLBE) Program Requirements; And (3) Adopting Appropriate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Findings**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The recommended legislation will enable a new professional baseball team to launch in West Oakland starting in June 2024, significantly improve a City park, and remedy an environmental impediment to affordable housing production on a City-owned lot.

By adopting the proposed Ordinance, the City Council will authorize the City Administrator to negotiate and execute license agreements with the Oakland Ballers Baseball Club, LLC, a Delaware limited liability company ("Ballers") to use the baseball field ("Field") at West Oakland's Raimondi Park ("Park") for home games and the City-owned lot at 1707 Wood Street ("Property") for game-day parking during their inaugural 2024 season in the Pioneer Baseball League.

The baseball field at the park is currently in unplayable condition due to deferred maintenance. The Property is subject to an exclusive negotiation agreement for affordable housing

City Council  
April 16, 2024

development but is currently unutilized and the affordable housing project delayed due to the presence of contaminated soil stockpiles that were dumped on the Property.

In consideration of a below market monthly rate of \$570 per month, the Ballers agree to improve and maintain the Field to professional baseball standards during their 2024 season pursuant to the license agreement for the field ("Field License Agreement"). The proposed improvements are valued at approximately \$1.6 million and would provide Oakland youth and the Oakland community at large a greatly enhanced neighborhood park. In consideration of a below market rate of \$500 per month, the Ballers will improve the Property for use as a parking lot during Baller game days, subject to a special event permit, and assume responsibility from the City for maintaining and keeping the Property secure during the season, pursuant to the license agreement for the Property ("Property License Agreement").

In addition to providing the up-front improvements necessary to render the field usable for professional games, the Ballers agree to provide day-of-game maintenance and upkeep throughout the 2024 season, including trash pick-up and removal, mowing, and associated grounds maintenance.

By adopting the proposed Resolution, the City Council will authorize a professional services agreement with the Ballers to remove the contaminated surface soil stockpiles from the Property, thereby addressing an obstacle to affordable housing development and any other interim use of the Property.

## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

### ***The Park***

Located at 1689 20<sup>th</sup> Street in Oakland (Assessor Parcel Number 7-568-1), Raimondi Park was named for Oakland Oaks player Ernie Raimondi. Baseball Hall of Fame outfielder Frank Robinson, National League All-Star center fielder Vada Pinson, and activist and Gold Glove winning center fielder Curt Flood are among the legendary athletes who played on this field as McClymonds High School students. Situated in West Oakland, the Park is in a historically underserved neighborhood and up until recently abutted the Woods Street homeless encampment. **Attachment A** provides an image and parcel map of the Park and Field.

More than a decade ago, Raimondi Park was identified as an existing Oakland park in need of renovation and rehabilitation under the City's Fiscal Year 2003-2005 Capital Improvement Program budget. An overall concept plan was developed in 2003 and 2004 by the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation (OPRF, formerly Friends of Parks and Recreation), with input from the community and the City. The overall estimated cost for the entire project at the time was approximately \$7.2 million. Due to a widespread economic downturn, and lack of adequate funds to complete the entire park restoration at one time, a two-phase plan was developed (Phase 1 and 2). After Council approved the capital improvements in 2007, Phase 1 commenced and was completed in September 2008.

As a result of significant budget cuts, OPRYD initiated creative avenues to increase revenues for the capital improvement needs in Oakland's parks. By partnering with its users, community non-profits and businesses, OPRYD has been able to better sustain its parks and sports fields

to ensure safe and community-oriented environments. In this vein, the proposed ordinance would authorize the City to receive a gift of significant improvements to Raimondi Park by way of the proposed Field License Agreement; allow a professional baseball team to utilize the Park for home games; enable Oakland youth teams to practice and play on a greatly improved Field; and provide year-round benefits to the Oakland community at large.

**Attachment B** provides a draft rendering of the Oakland Ballers proposed improvements and renovations to Field for their upcoming 2024 season, which include:

- Ground improvements: re-sodding the field and repairing the irrigation system to improve field drainage;
- Technology upgrades: upgrading the existing scoreboard to a large video scoreboard with recording and sound capabilities; and
- Equipment upgrades: adding padding to the outfield fence; replacing foul poles; repairing the existing dugout and bullpen; repairing or replacing fencing and netting; upgrading the backstop and outfield warning track; improving the lighting.

### ***The Team***

Cofounded by Bryan Carmel and Paul Freedman as the first West Coast franchise of the historic Pioneer Baseball League, the Oakland B's formed in 2023 with the intent of building a team that honors the legacy of Oakland's past great players and that values uniting Oaklanders through the power of community sports and teammanship. The Ballers will host their first home baseball game on June 4, 2024. The adoption of Raimondi Park by the Oakland Ballers baseball team will provide West Oakland with an infusion of excitement, community spirit, financial benefit, and neighborhood improvements.

The Ballers community-centered approach of partnering with the City of Oakland is evident in their proposal to rejuvenate Raimondi Park for their home games, creating a safer environment and improved baseball field where all Oaklanders may come and play on "The Field of Dreams." While the Oakland Ballers intend to use Raimondi Park as their home field, the upgrades and improvements to the Raimondi Baseball Field will benefit the West Oakland community whether or not Raimondi Field becomes the Ballers' permanent home. The proposed improvements will provide a high-quality and safe field for local baseball teams to play on, including the Oakland Unified School District ("OUSD") championship baseball team and local Little League teams. Upgraded facilities could serve to entice Little League Baseball to hold State and World Series championships in Oakland. Park improvements in this underserved neighborhood contribute to community pride, provide youth with a safe and modernized facility, make Oakland an attractive destination for athletic excellence, and offer the possibility for teams to represent Oakland, in Oakland, on a global stage.

### ***Permits and Agreements***

On March 14, 2024, the City entered into a Right of Entry Agreement with the Oakland Ballers, allowing the Ballers to begin repairing the Field. This includes repairs to the infield and outfield, drainage, fencing, backstop, foul poles, bullpens, netting, lighting and public restrooms.

Further improvements to the field require approval of a minor conditional use permit (CUP) and the proposed Field License Agreement. These improvements would include installation of a new scoreboard (as seen in **Attachment C**), bleachers, dugouts, batter's eye and moving fences to conform with league standards. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission (PRAC) is

considered and made a recommendation on the minor CUP on April 3 with an administrative determination.

The Ballers are also applying for a Special Event Permit to govern their use of the Field during game days and an administrative determination on this permit is expected in May.

### **1707 Wood Street**

The City purchased the Property in December 2007. It is a 3.12-acre site located between Wood Street and the Frontage Road between 18th Street and 20th Street across from Raimondi Park. The site is currently vacant and contains approximately 6,250 cubic yards resulting in approximately 9,700 tons of contaminated soil that was illicitly dumped on the Property in 2018. The Property is subject to an exclusive negotiation agreement with MidPen Housing Corporation and Habitat for Humanity East Bay / Silicon Valley, Inc., for the development of 170 affordable housing units, which was approved by City Council in December 2018 pursuant to [Resolution 87795 C.M.S.](#) and amended in December 2021 pursuant to [Resolution No. 88968 C.M.S.](#) The contaminated soil stockpiles are an impediment to development of the Property for affordable housing or any other interim use and should be removed.

## **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

The Ballers propose providing \$1.6 million in upgrades in addition to \$570/month in consideration for use of the Field for the 2024 league season. They intend to invite local businesses to vend food and concessions during games; facilitate youth teams' use of the upgraded facilities; and encourage community-centered activities such as movie nights. They will provide specialty field maintenance on game days, including trash and debris pick-up. The Field will continue to be what it has always been: a baseball field in a neighborhood park – but with an infusion of care, attention, upgrades and improvements that will increase its usability for sports and desirability as a venue for other community events.

This proposed agreement aligns with several Citywide priorities, the first being holistic community safety. Extensive research has proven the positive effects that creative activation of community space has on community safety; however, three challenges—resources, coordination, and sustainability—must be overcome in order for an activation project to provide community benefit. The Ballers are providing the infrastructure investment needed to restore a currently unusable field into one viable for minor league play, advancing the Citywide priority of vibrant, sustainable infrastructure. They are navigating the City processes and requirements for appropriate licenses, agreements and permitting needs, and are collaborating with the West Oakland community to ensure the proposed park improvements meet the neighborhood's needs; finally, they hope to become long-term stewards of Raimondi Park should a longer-term lease agreement with the City be viable. This proposed agreement, resulting in the revival of an historic but neglected field, also advances the Citywide priority of housing, economic, and cultural security.

The City has no professional league fields among the 41 ballfields and 52 multi-use fields maintained by the Parks & Tree Services Division. The City currently employs a staff of 1 FTE Equipment Operator, 4 FTE Gardener IIs, and 2 FTE Gardener Crew Leaders to maintain all 41 ballfields and 52 multi-use fields. With existing levels of service, the City is unable to provide an

alternative means to maintain the Raimondi Park baseball field at anything more than the current bare-bones levels that have rendered the field unusable for even community youth ballgames. The City does not have the budget to provide the facility upgrades and improvements outside of the proposed Field License Agreement.

The proposed resolution would allow the Ballers to remove the contaminated soil stockpiles that are an impediment to the production of 170 new affordable housing units on the Property while also enabling the Property's use for game day parking.

Oakland Municipal Code section 2.04.051.B permits the Council to waive advertising and the request for proposal / qualifications (RFP/Q) requirements upon a finding that it is in the best interest of the City to do so. Here, the City lacks the equipment and qualified personnel to perform the necessary soil removal and the proposed professional services agreement with the Ballers is in the public interest because of economy and better performance. Staff recommends that it is in the best interest of the City to waive the RFP/Q process due to the Ballers' proposed use of the Property for temporary special event parking for the Ballers home games at Raimondi Park this summer.

The Local Business Enterprise/Small Local Business Enterprise (LBE/SLBE) Program, Ordinance No. 13647 C.M.S., requires a minimum 50-percent (50%) participation for all professional service contracts valued at or over Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,00) when there are at least three certified businesses listed in the industry, trade, or profession that constitutes a major category of work; and if at least three L/SLBEs are not certified, then the requirement is either waived, or the 50% requirement may be set at a percent from 50% to 0%, but not less than 20% if at least one LBE/SLBE is certified and available. The Council may waive the City's LBE/SLBE program requirements pursuant to Part I of the Program guidelines, adopted by Ordinance No. 13647 C.M.S. Staff recommends that City Council waive the LBE/SLBE program requirements due to the community benefit that will result from removal of contaminated soil stockpiles, and the Ballers' commitment to use Oakland-based contractors and subcontractors. The services to be provided by the Ballers under the professional services agreement for soil removal are of a professional, scientific, or technical and temporary nature and shall not result in the loss of employment or salary by any person having permanent status in the competitive service.

The proposed Property License Agreement would, upon removal of the contaminated soil stockpiles, enable the Ballers to improve and utilize the Property for game day parking. This would support the Ballers use of the Field for home games. It would also relieve the City of approximately \$25,000 in currently monthly security costs, as the Ballers would assume responsibility for maintenance and security of the Property during the season. On this basis the proposed Property License Agreement at below market rent is in the best interests of the City.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The proposed Field License Agreement would generate \$570 per month in license fees (or \$6,840 over the one year term of the license agreement) plus a \$2,607.25 administrative processing fee pursuant to the Master Fee Schedule. The proposed Property License Agreement would generate \$500 per month in license fees (or at least \$2000 for the duration of

the Baller's 2024 season) plus the \$2,607.25 administrative processing fee. These funds would be deposited in General Purpose Fund (1010), Real Estate Organization (85231), Miscellaneous Land Rental Revenue Account (44219) and Other Revenue: Administrative Fees Account (48726), DP850 Administrative Project (1000019), Real Estate Program (PS32).

The proposed Field License Agreement would result in repairs and improvements to the Park valued at up to \$1.6 million. The agreement additionally provides ongoing field and site maintenance services valued at approximately \$1,240/week if otherwise outsourced to a third-party contractor and at approximately \$31,710/week if the City were to directly provide this level of service.

At the end of the Ballers' season, the City's Parks & Trees Services Division will take over field maintenance. No additional expenses will be incurred if maintenance remains at its current level of service. If the City desires to continue maintaining the field at the Ballers' professional care level, the Parks & Trees Services Division anticipates needing an additional \$1.7 million allocated to their department for additional equipment and FTE expenses as outlined in **Attachment D**. However, the City will be under no obligation to provide this higher level of maintenance and use of the Field by the Ballers after the 2024 season can be conditioned on the Ballers continuing to provide this level of ongoing maintenance.

Funding for the professional services agreement for soil removal from the 1707 Wood Street Property would come from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (1870), HTF Housing Development (Project 1000386, Org 89929) in an amount not to exceed \$300,000 and from the Low and Moderate Income Housing Asset Fund (LMIHAF) (2830), Housing Development Project (Project 100388, Org 89929) in an amount not to exceed \$550,000;

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

Since expressing an interest in using Raimondi Park as their home field, the Ballers have engaged in committed and ongoing community engagement efforts. The Ballers have committed to holding bi-weekly community meetings until the first home game on June 4, 2024. As part of their initial outreach effort, Ballers went door-to-door, expressing their intent to build with community and uplift the Oakland community through the love of sports. Their belief in partnering to co-create the experience is manifest in working closely with fans and viewing everyone involved/affected as a stakeholder.

Community members have expressed overwhelming support for this project, which will enhance the beauty, safety, and usability of Raimondi Park. Oakland has a long history of creating community excitement around sports teams, and the Oakland Ballers are no exception. Tickets for the 2024 season sold out in 40 minutes. Community concerns that are being addressed include the impact of additional traffic on the neighborhood, additional noise and light pollution.

The proposed use of the Field by the Ballers was discussed at PRAC on January 10 and March 13. PRAC considered and recommended the necessary minor CUP at its meeting on April 3.

## **COORDINATION**

This project continues to be coordinated between multiple City departments. OPRYD is working in concert with Oakland Public Works, the Economic & Workforce Development Department's Real Estate Division, the City Attorney's Office, the Planning & Building Department, and Department of Transportation. The Ballers are in active discussions with BART, AC Transit and Bike East Bay, the Department of Transportation, and the Friends of Raimondi Park.

## **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Economic:** The proposed agreements will result in \$1.6 million in park improvements to the West Oakland neighborhood and at least 48 professional baseball games played in the neighborhood. This has the potential of generating significant revenue for the West Oakland community. The Ballers have expressed their commitment to partnering with local businesses to provide concessions, and local food trucks can expect to have robust business on game nights and movie nights. The Ballers are also proposing to rent parking spaces from local warehouses. There is increased possibility of generating revenue through hosting Little League tournaments and other events that will bring participants in from outside of Oakland. Local security companies will see increased business during game days.

**Environmental:** The Baller's will utilize sustainable practices and environmentally-friendly materials where and when possible. The field will be natural grass sod, not artificial grass, and the natural seed is an approved infield mix. Discussions are in process with both BART and AC Transit to provide timed public transportation options and shuttle services, potentially increasing the number of attendees utilizing public transportation and thus reducing the carbon emissions during events. Bike East Bay is being consulted regarding bike routes to the park, and the Ballers intend on providing secure bike parking during events. The proposed professional services agreement would remove above-ground environmental contaminants from the West Oakland neighborhood.

**Race & Equity:** Raimondi Park is an historic park that has suffered due to lack of City capacity. The baseball field in its current condition is unusable. The proposed improvements and upgrades will allow the community as a whole to have access once more to a baseball field, increasing access and reducing barriers to outdoor sports for both youth and adults in this West Oakland neighborhood. OPRYD will be able to provide City-run sports clinics, leagues and events on the field. Currently three community leagues in Oakland partner with OPRYD: Oakland Babe Ruth League, Oakland Girls' Softball League, and North Oakland South Oakland Little League. Reopening the Raimondi baseball field would allow these groups to expand into West Oakland. OUSD students from McClymonds High School, among other schools, could potentially host playoff and championship games on a minor-league quality field. As part of their community engagement activities, the B's look forward to partnering with local schools, sports leagues, and community groups to host open clinics, games, and events for local baseball and softball teams. Activation of community spaces is an essential component in reducing crime and beautifying neighborhoods; this proposed agreement will bring minor league games to the park and provide opportunities for a myriad of other community events. The upgraded scoreboard will also allow for non-sport activations of the park including but not limited to neighborhood movie

nights. The proposed professional services agreement would remove an impediment to the development of 170 new affordable housing units.

### **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)**

The construction activities for the proposed project would entail minor construction activities, such as erection of bleachers and improvements to the sports field. In addition, project operations would use amplified sound system, crowd noise, fireworks, and food trucks, and would require the removal of contaminated soil stockpiles at the nearby 1707 Wood Street property for gameday parking.

Based on an examination of the CEQA analysis, findings, and conclusions of the West Oakland Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report (WOSP EIR), implementation of the proposed project would not substantially increase the severity of significant impacts identified in the WOSP EIR, nor would it result in new significant impacts related to noise that were not identified in the WOSP EIR. The WOSP EIR did not identify any mitigation measures related to noise, and none would be necessary for the proposed project.

The proposed project would be required to implement SCAs to reduce construction noise, and ensure project design and operation of the sound system equipment to meet applicable noise performance standards, (for reference, these are SCA-NOI-7: Operational Noise, SCA NOI-1: Construction Days/Hours, SCA NOI-2: Construction Noise, SCA NOI-3: Extreme Construction Noise, and SCA NOI-5: Construction Noise Complaints). On a separate and independent basis, the CEQA analysis for the project found that the project would be exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15301 (existing facilities), 15304 (minor alterations of land; temporary uses), 15303 (small structures), 15308 (protection of the environment), and 15183 (projects consistent with General Plan and Zoning).

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt:

An Ordinance (1) Authorizing The City Administrator To Negotiate And Execute 1-Year License Agreements With The Oakland Ballers, A Minor League Baseball Team, For Use Of (A) The Raimondi Park Baseball Field At A Rate Of Five Hundred Seventy Dollars (\$570) Per Month In Exchange For Approximately \$1.6 Million Dollars (\$1,600,000) Of Improvements And (B) 1707 Wood Street For Special Event Parking At A Rate Of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) Per Month; (2) Making Findings That The License For Below Fair Market Value Is In The Best Interest Of The City; And (3) Making Appropriate California Environmental Quality Act Findings; and

A Resolution (1) Awarding A Professional Services Agreement To The Oakland Ballers, A Professional Baseball Team, To Manage The Removal Of Contaminated Soil Stockpiles At 1707 Wood Street For The Term April 16, 2024 To September 1, 2024, In An Amount Not To Exceed Eight Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$850,000); (2) Waiving The City's Competitive Process And Local/Small Local Business Enterprise (L/SLBE) Program Requirements; And (3) Adopting Appropriate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Findings

For questions regarding this report, please contact Felicia Gotthelf, Management Assistant, at (510) 671-4657.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Fred Kelley  
Director, OPRYD

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Felicia Gotthelf, Management Assistant,  
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Reviewed by:  
Brendan Moriarty, Real Property Asset  
Manager, Economic & Workforce Development  
Department

Attachments (4):

- A: Raimondi Park Baseball Field Site Map and Image
- B: Draft Field Rendering
- C: Example Scoreboard
- D: Draft Raimondi Field Maintenance Budget