



**Dillon Stadium Community Use Meeting Notes**  
**Organized by the Park and Recreation Advisory Commission**  
**and the Friends of Colt Park**  
**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving**  
**10 Columbus Blvd, Hartford, CT 06106**  
**1/15/2020 6 pm – 7:30 pm**

Attendees: Omega Cobb (Hartford Hurricanes), Lee Mascolo (Capital Prep) Nicole Porter (HPS Operations Manager for Athletics), Joe Condren (Active City), Erika Frank (Hartford Foundation for Public Giving), Nick Lebron (City Councilperson), Erik Johnson (Director Development Services), Erin Howard (Economic Development Director), Michael Looney (Deputy Director Public Works), Janice Castle (Director of Community Engagement), Jeffrey Devereaux (Park and Recreation Advisory Commissioner), Brian Gallagher (Park and Recreation Advisory Commissioner) and Donna Swarr (Park and Recreation Advisory Commissioner/Friends of Colt Park)

After the 2016 Dillon Community Use meeting, the Park and Recreation Advisory Commission determined that the community's primary desire was access by the Hartford schools and Hartford youth leagues to Dillon. The City at that time was unable to support renovations and maintenance to the stadium. Currently, it is unable to provide upgrades or maintenance. The intent of the January 15, 2020 meeting was to gather input from the Hartford community concerning their experiences for scheduling, use and fee structure. The turnout was low, but many submitted their thoughts via email.

Hartford Public Schools (HPS) provided feedback that use of the stadium was a positive experience for students and the attendees, "playing there was great.... big improvement over the old stadium". There was a mixed experience in ease of booking the stadium. Issues which were brought up included; use of both bleachers, security arrangements, equity amongst high school use, use of locker rooms and snow removal. Use of both bleachers is deemed to be essential as it was said that sometimes one bleacher works and sometimes it doesn't. But you don't know which it will be until the day of the game. They would want to be able to use both bleachers in the future. Determining what security is needed is an area for improvement. A standard practice for security cost and staffing is highly desirable. The schools have their own requirements already, but this is for inside the facility. Hartford Police's (HPD) additional staffing is determined for each use on an individual basis, but the costs can be radically different. The schools can't absorb an additional cost after the event. Use of the locker rooms was not allowed. HPS would like that to be reviewed. Snow removal for the football games needs to have a process in place. A contract with a service or shared equipment is being considered. Next year the middle schools and 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades are looking forward to scheduling their tournaments and finals in the stadium. HPS high schools used the facility twenty-nine times in 2019.

The Youth Leagues struggled with use of the facility, arrangements for determining dates were challenging, the lack of "huddle space", the cost is too high for them and misinformation resulted in a low usage in this category. The Hartford Hurricane's stated that "the field and the layout of the field is 100% great and one of the best experiences for kids". The Hartford Hurricanes would like to host, for the first time, the regional

championship games in Hartford next year. They would like to use the locker room as a huddle space for communications and as a warming area. They, too, need to have access to both bleachers. It was such an They reminded us that football games can't be played at Dillon stadium until after soccer season ends. To have the children between the ages 6 to 14 sitting for 10 minutes sitting outside during the half time is not desirable. The cost of the relining the field for football and back to soccer is the barrier to allowing the football games to be played during the soccer season. Only three bookings occurred.

Adult Leagues did not use the facility in 2019. They do not qualify for community use funding, fees are mostly a deterrent. There are several football, soccer and rugby leagues in Hartford.

Special Events is confusing category for organizers. There are two sub-categories which include community use and "other". Community Events include non-athletic and large athletic events of over 500. In 2019, there were three; Stomp the Violence, Turkey Day and the Dillon Stadium Community Day. The "other" category is reserved for commercial use and in 2019. Hartford Athletics holds events as well, but those events have contractually agreed upon service agreements. An issue arose last year relating to how are the number of attendees determined, as this is what city services are base upon. Is it hour by hour? Or is it total attendance? A discussion about how many players can be on the field at the same time was discussed. Being that the Community Special Events includes large scale athletic events, the term "Jamboree" came up as a potential issue, as this allows many more players on the field than a traditional game. Dillon's field was deemed not to be a suitable use for this kind of event. Several people have asked if there are plans for a cover for the field which would allow for different kinds of events to be held at Dillon, both community and "other". The artificial turf is an expensive investment and ensuring that there is as little wear and tear to it is highly desirable. The costs of such a cover are quite high but are being explored.

The 24 hour advance notice rule was questioned, they asked that this be reviewed. There were exceptions, but a policy or communication would be helpful.

The renovation of Dillon Stadium was through a CRDA loan which is being repaid by the Hartford Athletic rental agreement. Without their continued support and their financial success continued community use of Dillon will not be possible.