



City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Department Source: Parks and Recreation

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: August 6, 2018

Re: Set a Public Hearing for the Construction of a Cross Country Course and Supporting Amenities at Gans Creek Recreation Area and Master Plan Update for the Park

Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Department is requesting a public hearing be set for the construction of a cross country course and supporting amenities at Gans Creek Recreation Area and approving an updated master plan for the park. The improvements at Gans Creek Recreation Area will include the construction of a championship-level cross country course, additional parking, and ADA walkways. The total project budget for the cross country course and infrastructure improvements is \$200,000. The funding for these proposed improvements represent a portion of the Southeast Regional Park – Gans/Philips Phase I project, with a total Park Sales Tax funding of \$2,350,000 being appropriated over multiple fiscal years (FY2013-FY2016 and FY2020). Portions of the project will be bid through the City's Purchasing Department and will be completed using a combination of contract and force account labor. Contract labor will be used for the grading of the cross country course, asphalt paving and walkway installation. Park staff will complete all other facets of the project, including turf establishment, irrigation and starting line/finish line construction. The cross country course improvements are scheduled to begin fall 2018 with an anticipated completion date of summer 2019. Park staff anticipates returning to the City Council at a later date to enter into an agreement with the University of Missouri as a co-sponsor of this facility and to appropriate additional donated funds for course improvements, including the potential construction of a timing tower, player's pavilion, race director/media center and permanent seating.

Discussion

The 320-acre Gans Creek Recreation Area (GCRA) is located at 3360 E. Gans Road and was purchased by the City of Columbia on September 14, 2007. After an extensive public input process, the Gans Creek Recreation Area master plan was approved by the City Council on May 3, 2010. The first phase of the development at Gans Creek Recreation Area represented a portion of the Southeast Regional Park – Gans/Philips Phase I project and was approved by City Council on October 7, 2013. The park currently contains five multi-purpose athletic fields, parking, concession/restroom facility and expanded green space across the regional park. The multi-purpose athletic fields at the park are used by multiple user groups, including Sporting Columbia (soccer), Father Tolton Catholic High School, Columbia Public Schools and Show-Me State Games. The fields are available for private tournaments and sports league games throughout the year. The total project budget for the Southeast Regional Park – Gans/Philips Phase I project is \$2,350,000, funded by the 2010 and 2015 Park Sales Tax ballots and appropriated over multiple fiscal years (FY2013-FY2016 and FY2020).



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The Parks and Recreation Department is requesting a public hearing be set for the construction of a cross country course and supporting amenities at Gans Creek Recreation Area and approving an updated master plan for the park. Park staff is proposing to construct a championship-level cross country course, additional parking adjacent to the course, and ADA walkways at the park.

Public Input for the Proposed Improvements at GCRA and Updated Park Master Plan:

As part of the initial 2010 master plan process, cross country coaches from the University of Missouri recommended the use of Gans Creek as a cross country course. At the time, the need for additional full size soccer fields was a funding priority. In 2016, the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department was approached by Columbia Public Schools staff regarding available land owned by the Department that could be used for cross country team practices and meets. Staff from both organizations met and discussed different land options available for cross country including Gans Creek Recreation Area, Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area (Cosmo Park) and the Battle park property located adjacent to Battle High School. After reviewing the available space and terrain at each park property, both parties agreed that Gans Creek Recreation Area would be the ideal location for the course. Park staff worked with staff from Columbia Public Schools to create a draft of the potential course at GCRA and met with other interested parties to discuss the possibility of a permanent course at the park. Staff met with coaches from the University of Missouri and Columbia College to discuss the course layout, necessary amenities and potential interest from each group for use of the course. University of Missouri Athletics has continued to collaborate with park staff throughout the remaining portions of the public input process. After meeting with these groups, staff met with representatives from the Missouri State High School Athletics Association to discuss the course as a location for the Missouri State High School Cross Country Championships.

After the initial input gathered from different user groups, park staff held an interested parties meeting at Gans Creek Recreation Area (GCRA) on July 10, 2018. Park staff met with over 30 citizens to discuss the proposed changes to the GCRA master plan and the construction of the cross country course. Staff also provided the public with an opportunity to provide additional comments about the project through an online survey at [como.gov](https://www.como.gov). Feedback from the public input meeting and online survey can be found at:

<https://www.como.gov/parksandrec/cip/capital-improvement-project-gcra-cross-country/>

Staff introduced the proposed improvements to the Parks & Recreation Commission at their July 19, 2018 meeting. After discussion of the changes to the GCRA master plan and cross country course construction, the commissioners voted to endorse the updated GCRA master plan and improvement plans at the park and recommended that Council approve the plans as presented. After considering all citizen comments and the P&R Commission recommendation, staff believes that the updated master plan for Gans Creek Recreation Area and proposed cross country course improvements represents a consensus of facility users, community partners and staff.



Proposed Cross Country Course Improvements at GCRA:

The Parks and Recreation Department is proposing to construct a championship-level cross country course at the park including the construction of the race course, starting and finishing line structures, additional parking and necessary ADA walkways for athletes, coaches and spectators. Phase I construction is estimated to cost \$200,000 and will include the following:

1. A combination of contract and force account labor will be used to complete the race course construction including course grading, irrigation installation and turf establishment. Contract labor will be used to grade the following areas: the large area for the starting line, finish line and spectator viewing areas, 40 foot wide 2k/3k running loops through the park and grading for the additional 69 car parking lot. Park staff will complete all irrigation installation and turf establishment for the course construction.
2. Park construction staff will construct the permanent structures for the starting line, finish line and 1k/2k distance markers. Each of the structures will be a combination of metal, concrete block and stone veneer with electricity available at each location. The permanent construction of each of these amenities will allow for quick setup of the cross country course by different user groups.
3. Contract labor will be used to construct a 50-car parking lot adjacent to the cross country course and existing parking lots. The additional parking is needed for parking cars during large events and the space will also be used for staging portable toilets, food trucks and merchandise tents during cross country events. The parking lot will have 46 regular parking spaces and 4 ADA parking spaces. A combination of contract labor and park staff will also be used to install a round-a-bout at the east side of the multi-purpose athletic fields. The new infrastructure will be utilized as a drop off point for shuttles during large events and allow for future development in this area of GCRA as shown on the updated park master plan.
4. Park construction staff will construct all necessary ADA walkways associated with the cross country course design. The walkways will provide ADA access from the parking lot to different areas of the cross country course, including the finish line, course viewing berm, and future buildings planned for the cross country course.

The total project budget for the cross country course and infrastructure improvements is \$200,000. The funding for these proposed improvements represent a portion of the Southeast Regional Park – Gans/Philips Phase I project, with a total Park Sales Tax funding of \$2,350,000 being appropriated over multiple fiscal years (FY2013-FY2016 and FY2020). Portions of the project will be bid through the City's Purchasing Department, and the proposed improvements will be completed using a combination of contract and force account labor. Construction of the improvements is anticipated to begin fall 2018, and staff anticipates the park improvements will be completed by summer 2019.



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Partnership with University of Missouri Athletics:

The final design of the cross country course at Gans Creek Recreation Area has been a collaborative effort between park planning staff and the University of Missouri track and field and cross country coaches. The cross country course will serve as the home course for the Mizzou men's and women's cross country programs with the teams practicing at the facility and hosting annual cross country meets. The GCRA cross country course is scheduled to be the host site of the 2021 SEC Championships, and it is anticipated that the course will become a future host site for the NCAA Championships. The NCAA Championships, held annually in November, will traditionally bring over 15,000 athletes, coaches and spectators to the host city. Staff anticipates returning to the City Council at a later date with a use agreement between the City of Columbia and University of Missouri Athletics outlining the Mizzou Athletics use of the cross country course and responsibilities of each party. The agreement will be similar to the facility usage agreement between Columbia College and the City of Columbia for the use of athletic fields at Atkins Park and Antimi Sports Complex approved by the City Council on August 1, 2016.

As part of the partnership with University of Missouri Athletics, future improvements to the cross country course have been proposed to accommodate large race events; television and radio broadcasts; and collegiate athletes, coaches and training staffs. The following improvements are proposed as future additions to the cross country course, and Mizzou Athletics is currently actively fundraising to raise the necessary funds to construct each amenity:

1. A 42 foot by 78 foot athlete barn located at the finish line of the cross country course, which will serve as the cool down area for athletes after each race. The pavilion will provide a space for athletes to collect themselves after completing their race, meet with doctors or emergency personnel or use dedicated restroom facilities. The pavilion will be similar in design to other larger shelters in the park system and could be used as a rental shelter during non-cross country use.
2. A 15 foot tall timing tower will be constructed between the finish line and athlete pavilion and serve as the timing station for all race events. The building will be elevated to provide optimum view for timing officials and provide race coordinators with the necessary electric, fiber and Wi-Fi to correctly time any race on the cross country course.
3. A 1,300 square foot indoor facility located adjacent to the athlete pavilion that will serve as the race coordinator/media headquarters for cross country events. The indoor space will provide the necessary room for the race coordinator to handle all race programming and provide space for media present at large events, such as the SEC Championships or NCAA Championships. The facility will also include permanent restrooms accessible on the exterior of the building.
4. A multi-tier awards platform will be constructed adjacent to the existing concession stand to serve as the awards presentation location for all race competitions. The



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Champions Plaza will provide an elevated platform for the presentations, audio necessary for presenting in front of large crowds, and adequate space for awards ceremony spectators.

Additional User Groups and Events at the GCRA Cross Country Course:

The construction of the cross country course at Gans Creek Recreation Area will provide a solution for the issue of no access for cross country in the city of Columbia. The construction of the course will allow for recreational and competitive use and will become a key sports tourism economic driver for the city of Columbia. The construction of the cross country course will allow the following scheduled and future events to take place in Columbia:

1. Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) Cross Country State Championships - Columbia has secured the high school state championships for five years starting in 2019. The event held annually during the first Saturday in November will bring over 1,300 participants, 7,500 spectators and media from over 75 different outlets to Columbia for the cross country championships.
2. Columbia College Cross Country – Park staff has met with the coaches of the Columbia College Cross Country teams and the cross country course will annually host one or two home meets for the college. Additionally, the cross country course will provide the necessary course and amenities to host the American Midwest Conference (AMC) Championships and NAIA Championships each fall. The NAIA championships are typically held in mid-November with over 650 male and female athletes participating in the race and an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 spectators at the event. Upon completion of the cross country course, park staff anticipates bidding annually for these events.
3. Columbia Public Schools – Park staff has met with Athletic Directors and coaches representing each high school in Columbia and discussed different uses for the cross country course. The course will be used as a practice site for their high school programs, as well as the host site for one to two events each cross country season. One proposed event is the Columbia Classic which would be an annual race two to three weeks prior to the MSHSAA State Championships. The event would be similar in size to the Forest Park Cross Country Festival which includes 17 divisions ranging from middle school through an open category. The Forest Park cross country event has an estimated 100 high school boys teams and 100 high school girls teams with an estimated 200 – 300 runners in each division.

Columbia Public Schools (CPS) also offers cross country at each of the six middle schools with an estimated 180 to 200 male and female athletes. CPS currently hosts four cross country meets in the park system bringing multiple out of town middle school teams to Columbia for the competitions. Estimated attendance at each of these events is 350 to 500 runners and additional spectators and coaches.



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4. Columbia Parks and Recreation - Blue Thunder Track and Cross Country - Columbia's own Blue Thunder Track and Cross Country program has over 120 athletes that would practice and compete at the cross country course throughout the fall season. The cross country course would allow the Blue Thunder program to host one or two meets each year attracting 250 to 300 athletes and over 300 spectators at each event. Blue Thunder Cross Country athletes participate in the Cross Country Coaches National Youth Championships each year, and the construction of the course at GCRA would allow Columbia to bid to be a host for this competition each year.
5. The Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Sports Tourism sales staff is currently working with representatives from Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) to become a future host of the AAU cross country national championships in Columbia. The event would attract 500 to 750 athletes and 1,000 to 2,200 spectators.
6. The cross country course will also be available to local track clubs and recreational runners when not in use by other groups that have reserved the course. Similar to other rental facilities, such as soccer fields, the cross country course will be open to individuals or small groups unless it has been reserved by an organization, company or club for a race event.

Approval of the Updated Master Plan for Gans Creek Recreation Area:

On May 3, 2010, the City Council approved the initial master plan for Gans Creek Recreation Area. The proposed construction of the cross country course will require changes to the original master plan and staff is requesting approval of the updated master plan. The following changes are proposed as part of the updated master plan:

1. Construction of the cross country course will eliminate one of the proposed multi-purpose athletic fields shown in the original master plan for GCRA. The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department currently has 12 full-size multi-use athletic fields and adequately serves the needs of our soccer, football, lacrosse and ultimate frisbee user groups with these 12 fields and the other smaller athletic fields located at Cosmo Park. Staff is proposing reserving space at Philips for additional soccer fields if the demand requires it.
2. Construction of the cross country course will eliminate three baseball/softball fields and three t-ball fields from the master plan for the park. The current priority for the Parks and Recreation Department is to develop the youth baseball/softball complex at Thomas E. Atkins Jr. Memorial Park to complete the proposed improvements shown in the Atkins Park master plan and would recommend construction of the proposed 5 field complex at Atkins rather than any baseball/softball construction at GCRA. Atkins Park currently has 5 baseball fields and additional baseball/softball fields at Atkins would create a central location for baseball/softball in northeast Columbia and be more convenient for field and facility maintenance, concession operations and participants and parents with children in multiple age groups or gender. The t-ball fields could still be considered in the future development of GCRA in the area labeled



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future recreational activity development on the updated GCRA master plan if the need for fields is identified through public input.

3. The proposed tennis court complex will be relocated to Philips Park near the Columbia Sports Fieldhouse. This creates an active recreational complex making use of shared infrastructure such as roads, utilities and parking lots. It also becomes more accessible to the adjacent neighborhoods.
4. Other amenities proposed in the original master plan for the park remain in the updated GCRA master plan but are shown in different areas of the park. During the purchase of the park property and creation of the master plan, park staff had the desire to develop the park property as a regional park with similar amenities as Cosmo Park. Combined with future improvements at A. Perry Philips Park across Gans Road, park staff feels that the updated master plan offers the desired amenities for daily park use. Staff is still proposing to construct four shelters, two playgrounds, walking trails, dog park, additional parking, and a 1.4 acre fishing pond at GCRA as part of the updated master plan. These amenities will be constructed when funds become available for park development.
5. The updated master plan has also allowed park staff to reduce the total amount of impervious surface by over 325,000 square feet due to the green space needed for the cross country course, reduction in necessary parking with the elimination of the baseball/softball fields, and elimination of the internal roadway shown on the original GCRA master plan. The removal of additional sports lighting as required for baseball/softball fields is seen as a positive by some nature enthusiasts.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: The total project budget for the initial construction of the cross country course is \$200,000, funded by the Park Sales Tax and representing a portion of the Southeast Regional Park – Gans/Philips Phase I project, with a total Park Sales Tax funding of \$2,350,000 being appropriated over multiple fiscal years (FY2013-FY2016 and FY2020).

Long-Term Impact: Staff anticipates an annual increase in expenses of \$5,000 to \$8,000 upon completion of cross country course at GCRA. The increase in expenses is associated with the course maintenance (mowing, fertilization and painting) and race preparations, such as fencing setup and trash collection. Staff anticipates offsetting these expenses through revenues generated from race events throughout the year.

Vision & Strategic Plan Impact

Primary Impact: Parks, Recreation & Greenways, **Secondary Impact:** Not Applicable, **Tertiary Impact:** Not Applicable



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Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Infrastructure, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Legislative History

Date	Action
06/06/2016	Ordinance #22834: Authorizing construction of a concession/restroom facility at Gans Creek Recreation Area https://gocolumbiamo.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2723111&GUID=6BD0F2BC-03BD-4B6B-B9E2-22BCBCBC4063&Options=&Search=
10/07/2013	Ordinance #21847: Authorizing the construction of the Gans Creek Recreation Area – Phase I improvement project https://www.como.gov/Council/Commissions/downloadfile.php?id=11097
05/03/2010	Ordinance #20614: Approving the 2010 Southeast Regional Park Master Plan – A. Perry Philips Park and Gans Creek Recreation Area http://gocolumbiamo.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=218&meta_id=14421

Suggested Council Action

Approve the resolution setting the public hearing for the construction of a cross country course and supporting amenities at Gans Creek Recreation Area and approving an updated master plan for the park.