

Maintenance to begin on high school athletic field

By LEANN SCHENKE

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ROCK HALL — Work is set to begin on maintenance of Kent County High School's athletic field after the board of education voted to award a contract to WindView Athletic Fields for \$8,540.

During a Board of Education meeting March 11, the board discussed how best to fix the field after Joe Wheeler, supervisor of operations, addressed some of the issues with it.

Wheeler said turf experts who evaluated the field recommended it be aerated, clumps of grass broken up, "slit seeded" with "turf-type tall fescue blue grass blend and blanket turf-type perennial rye grass," a "top dressing" of fine graded compost sand be applied, apply starter fertilizer and slow release fertilizer every two to three weeks, monitor field conditions and advise maintenance.

"What has happened is the grass has grown into clumps. It has a tough surface for the kids to run on. So that is a concern of the parents, the boosters and the students of Kent County High School," Wheeler said. "We've done some maintenance on the field, but we haven't really done a lot of maintenance on the field."

Wheeler said his expectation of the contact is the field will be playable this spring. However, when the work starts is weather dependent.

After board member Wendy Costa asked why Greenscapes, the company that installed the existing turf, is not responsible for maintenance of the field, Wheeler said the contract with Greenscapes has expired so it is up to the district to



PHOTO BY DANIEL DIVILIO

A loader is shown driving across the main athletic field at Kent County High School in Worton in 2017, when the playing surface was replaced. Issues are being raised with the new surface and the Board of Education has awarded a contract for repair work.

maintain the field.

Wheeler said Greenscapes has treated the field in the past, but the biggest issue is the type on grass on the field, which is prone to clumping.

Superintendent Karen Couch said the county government did pay to have the field surveyed by a third party to make sure it was resurfaced correctly. She said however, the school district has not "engaged in any turf manage-

ment."

As far as the irrigation system, Couch said the high level of iron in the water at Worton led to the decision to installing drip irrigation as opposed to pop-up sprinklers.

However, Wheeler said when the water was tested, the iron content was not high enough to necessitate drip irrigation.

Couch said there also was a concern pop-up sprinklers cause the field and track to be dyed orange

because of the high iron content in the water. She also said if the field was to be switched to a pop-up sprinklers, they water may need to be treated first.

Board member Bryan Williams said he would prefer pop-up sprinklers. He said, though, he understands the need for drip irrigation because the water quality is so iron rich in Worton.

Student athletes, parents and members of the Athletics Boost-

er Club attended the meeting as well as Kent County Commissioners Tom Mason and Bob Jacob, though they did not comment on the issue.

Earlier, during public participation, Dennis Walters, president of the booster club, said the field is not an issue the community takes lightly.

"What we know, of course, is that we spent \$280,000 on the stadium field and few are pleased with the outcome at this point," Walters said.

He said all the athletic turf specialists who evaluated the field agree it does not have the correct blend of turf considering the amount of traffic the field gets. They also said the drip irrigation system is "not ideal" and there need to be comprehensive maintenance plan put in place for the field.

Walters also said the field is not just used for football, but that it is important for a variety of sports.

"My estimates are that easily 175 student athletes call this their home field, so our goal should be to address the immediate concerns, provide our student athletes with a safe field that they can play on, but also a field that they can be proud of. I mean given the amount of money that we spent on this field, it's arguably still the worst field in the Bayside conference," Walters said. "Let's make it our goal to take action and get it right this time so we're not talking about it again in the very near future."

Board President Joe Goetz, Vice President Trish McGee and Williams voted in favor of the contract. Costa opposed and Nivek Johnson abstained from the vote.

High school students tour local businesses for insight into possible careers

DENTON — In January, nearly 50 sophomores from Colonel Richardson and North Caroline high schools took part in a day-long career tour, visiting local businesses to gain career insights and inspiration.

The Maryland Business Roundtable for Education (MBRT) designed the tour for students who participate in the Next Generation Scholars program and have a demonstrated financial need.

The 10th graders visited Benedictine, Tanglewood Conservatories, Choptank Community Health System, Choptank Transport, Maryland Plastics and Crystal Steel Fabricators.

They toured facilities and learned about

education requirements and what to expect during a typical workday. They also heard from and spoke directly with professionals about their industries.

Student responses from a post-tour survey revealed:

- 98 percent agreed or strongly agreed they learned the importance of one's education and how it applies to one's career.

- 100 percent agreed or strongly agreed they are inspired and motivated to continue focusing on their studies as a Next Generation Scholar.

- 100 percent agreed or strongly agreed they learned something new at each stop along the tour.

For more than 25 years, MBRT has been connecting the business community with local schools through programs like its Maryland Scholars Speakers Bureau and STEM Specialists in the Classroom.

In 2017, MBRT added the Next Generation Scholars program, which provides funding through the Howard P. Rawlings Maryland Guaranteed Access Grant, administered by the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The grant provides an award that will help cover the cost of full-time study at a Maryland college or university for low-income families.

MBRT currently serves more than 2,300 students in 12 middle and high schools

across five Maryland counties. The organization is one of several that partner with leadership and school counselors at select schools throughout the state to provide grade-specific services to ensure that students eligible for Next Generation Scholars graduate ready for their next steps in college, career and life.

MBRT coordinators help students and parents understand college is an option for everyone, while bridging the knowledge gap that exists for many families about college and their chosen career paths.

Learn more about MBRT's Next Generation Scholars program at www.mbrt.org/nextgen.

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