

News Release

Comptroller Lierman issues statements following Wednesday's Board of Public Works Meeting

*She urges state to embrace the statutes of the Climate
Solutions Now Act and redirect resources toward
building sustainable, climate-resilient infrastructure*

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (October 4, 2023) - Today, the Maryland Board of Public Works (BPW) considered 85 items as part of its routine agenda, authorizing more than \$325 million in state expenditures. During the meeting, Comptroller Brooke Lierman provided comments on the following agenda items:

Maryland Stadium Authority- Design and Preconstruction Services for the Arthur Perdue and Prince George's Stadiums - The Maryland Stadium Authority requested from the BPW a contract for design and preconstruction services to the Baltimore-based Gilbane Building Company for improvements at both the Arthur Perdue Stadium in Salisbury and the Prince George's Stadium in Bowie. The cost of the proposed twenty-six-month contracts are \$614,961 and \$864,581, respectively.

The Comptroller commended the Maryland Stadium Authority for its commitment to addressing inquiries from the office regarding the sustainability of these projects.

“Once the design phases are complete, and the MSA returns to the Board for modifications after negotiating the construction contracts, I look forward to MSA sharing with us specifically how the final designs of these projects will meet, and hopefully exceed, energy performance standards and compliance with the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. Thank you, MSA. I look forward to continuing the discussion.”

Baltimore County- Program Open Space Local Share Funding- Baltimore County requested from the BPW \$4,000,000 in Program Open Space Local Share funding for the acquisition and development of 21 acres of waterfront property for a

new community park in Sparrows Point, including the development of an artificial turf field. Comptroller Lierman provided the following comments before her vote.

“First, I will vote for this item – I don’t want to bury the lede – because Baltimore County has not ever had guidance that it should not use Project Open Space dollars for artificial turf, so they should not bear the brunt of a no vote from me. And I should note that the circumstances in their park are such that they are not converting green space to plastic – i.e., artificial turf – they are building a field on what was basically a superfund site. So, the facts are distinguishable from most turf builds.

“Although this is but one program administered by the Department of Natural Resources, I think it’s an important example of the need for our state agencies to build resilience into their missions to ensure we are building for the next 40 years, not just the next four.

“Artificial turf is not the win-win solution that many prior park directors believed it would be, and its costs are being born now by those playing on these fields and being injured or suffering staph infections, and will be borne by future governments who have the pay the incredible cost of disposing of the fields before replacement.

“Converting green space to plastic and rubber-filled fields is the antithesis of conserving natural resources. Perhaps even more importantly, it is time for all of our state programs to embrace the statutory mandate from the Climate Solutions Now Act, which requires the state to develop plans, adopt regulations, and implement programs that reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions.

And, per state statute, each state agency must review its planning, regulatory, and fiscal programs to identify and recommend actions to more fully integrate the consideration of Maryland’s greenhouse gas reduction goal and the impacts of climate change.

“Program Open Space – and other local grant programs concerned with our natural environment – are part of this calculus. An average single 80,000 sq ft. artificial turf field contains 40,000 lbs. of plastic carpeting and 400,000 lbs. of infill, usually granulated tire waste, sometimes mixed with sand. As of April 2022, Maryland had at least 380 synthetic turf playing fields, amounting to more than 71,000 tons of plastic carpet and infill, nearly 130,000 cubic yards of infill, and 589 acres of plastic carpet.

“Synthetic turf fields have a large carbon footprint, and their toxic substances end up as ‘forever waste.’ These plastic carpets emit greenhouse gases like ethylene and methane continuously throughout their lifespan, and that doesn’t count the phenomenal amount of greenhouse gases that go into the production of the products in the fields in the first place.

“In addition, as we finish the final months of the hottest year on record, it’s worth stating that there is zero debate about the surface temperature differential of artificial turf. The National Park and Rec Association indicates that: ‘the high surface-level temperatures recorded on these fields compared to natural turf have been well-

documented. grass fields rarely get above 100° F.’ Brigham Young University found that: ‘The surface temperature of the synthetic turf was 37° F higher than asphalt and 86.5° F hotter than natural turf.’

“Artificial turf fields, in comparison, regularly rise significantly higher than natural grass. Penn State University’s Center for Sports Surface Research found that turf conditions averaged from 140° F to 170° F during hot, sunny weather.

“If we are going to keep our kids and athletes safe – from burns and heat stroke and more – and we are going to fully implement Climate Solutions Now, it is up to our state agencies – including DNR – to review their grant programs, like Program Open Space – to ensure that we are identifying ways to build climate resilience into our state programs, including our grant programs. I know that Sec. Kurtz and the DNR team are tackling this head-on.

“After discussing this issue with the Joint Committee on Program Open Space, I am glad that they have agreed to take this issue on, and they will be working with DNR and our local governments to ensure that state funding and state programs are being used for climate-friendly green infrastructure and natural products in the future. I know that DNR will embrace that approach as well.

“I can also say that in the future, now that we have identified this as an issue, I will look much more skeptically at approving funding through programs that impact our natural environment in a way that increases greenhouse gas emissions and reduces climate resiliency rather than increasing it.

“I believe it is essential that we move rapidly to redirect our precious state resources toward building climate-resilient infrastructure. Our kids will thank us.”

More information can be found at <https://bpw.maryland.gov/>

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