

CHRIS THOMAS REMARKS (3 minutes):

Good evening, my name is Chris Thomas, I live just down the street from city hall here in Kirkland. I'm on the board of the Kirkland American Little League organization. For context, there are two little leagues in our city, and our little league covers a pretty sizable portion of our city, serving about 700 girls and boys out of the nearly 1000 children playing softball and baseball throughout the city, about 70 percent. We provide every child in our city a chance to play even if they cannot afford it, and we leverage hundreds of parent volunteers to operate the league, greatly relieving any burden on the city to have to create or operate a similar program on its own.

Our league plays the vast majority of its games at Everest and Crestwoods Parks. As some of you know, our league has been trying to work with the city to replace dirt infields with an 80 ft by 80 ft artificial turf overlay surface. Unfortunately, each spring, we are prevented from using these infields during roughly 75% of our practice and games due to unplayable field conditions. Despite the incredible work by our City Parks Department maintenance staff to prepare these fields, we often have to cancel games and practices, even on sunny days like today and on days when we haven't had a rain event since the day before.

I can also tell you that other sports in our city do not experience cancellations, simply because you can play sports on grass fields in almost any weather condition. Unfortunately, the girls and boys playing softball and baseball in our league are disproportionately impacted by our region's weather more than other children, because these sports rely on an infield surface. I can also tell you that these cancellations are a thing of the past in virtually every community in this region except ours, because every other city has invested in simple and inexpensive artificial infield surfaces, sometimes instead of and sometimes in addition to very expensive multi purpose fields.

As you know, multipurpose fields like 132nd Square Park are quite expensive and require massive amounts of infrastructure investments, often in the tens of millions of dollars. Simple turf infield overlays are very simple and inexpensive, and projects can be completed in weeks. I'm an engineer that's spent years in the consulting engineering space and I can attest that this is a far more simple type of project than that the city has experienced with 132nd Park. We've recently worked with King County as they studied a potential infield turf pilot project at Taylor Fields, and the county's consulting engineer determined that a simple infield surface can cost anywhere between \$200,000 and \$400,000, depending on the scope and drainage needs.

We expect this cost to be higher for a city-managed project at a city park, but we respectfully ask the city to advance funding for these pilot projects so the city can begin to have fields that are on par with other nearby cities when it comes to resiliency and playability.

We implore you to help us get this pilot project completed by next spring and we ask that you listen to the dozens of moms and kids who will spend the next few meetings sharing more about their personal experiences and how this new investment would solve a significant challenge.

Thank you!