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| FROM | NAME & TITLE | CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR | CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO |  |
| | AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS | DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 TH FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET | | |
| | SUBJECT | CITY COUNCIL BILL #20-0628 / Naming a Pavilion and a Nature Park in the Joseph H. Rash Playfield to be the BGE Pavilion and the BGE Nature Park | | |

TO The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 North Holliday Street

DATE: October 23, 2020

At its regular meeting of October 22, 2020, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #20-0628, for the purpose of naming a pavilion in the Joseph H. Rash Playfield (Block 890, Lot 006), to be located at the coordinates 39.281483, -76.610425, the BGE Pavilion; and naming a nature park in the Joseph H. Rash Playfield (Block 890, Lot 006), to be located at the coordinates 39.281657, -76.610659, the BGE Nature Park.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report which recommended approval of City Council Bill #20-0628 and adopted the following resolution, eight members being present (seven in favor, with one recusal):

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its Departmental staff, with consideration for testimony presented in the meeting, including a presentation of facts and plans by the applicant, and recommends that City Council Bill #20-0628 be passed by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Eric Tiso, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-8358.

CR/ewt

attachment

cc: Mr. Nicholas Blendy, Mayor's Office
Mr. Matthew Stegman, Mayor's Office
Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office
The Honorable Edward Reisinger, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
Mr. Colin Tarbert, BDC
Ms. Livhu Ndou, BMZA
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD
Ms. Elena DiPietro, Law Dept.
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC
Mr. Liam Davis, DOT
Ms. Natawna Austin, Council Services
Mr. Dominic McAlily, Council Services
Ms. Laurie Schwartz, Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore, Inc.



Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Sean D. Davis, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

October 22, 2020

REQUEST: City Council Bill #20-0628/ City Property – Naming a Pavilion and a Nature Park in the Joseph H. Rash Playfield to be the BGE Pavilion and the BGE Nature Park

For the purpose of naming a pavilion in the Joseph H. Rash Playfield (Block 890, Lot 006), to be located at the coordinates of 39.281483, -76.610425, the BGE Pavilion; and naming a nature park in the Joseph H. Rash Playfield (Block 890, Lot 006), to be located at the coordinates of 39.281657, -76.610659, the BGE Nature Park.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Martin French

PETITIONERS: Councilmember Costello, at the request of Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore, Inc.

OWNER: Mayor and City Council

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: The site is currently improved with a 7.5-acre waterfront park located on the south shore of the Inner Harbor Basin of the Patapsco River. It was created in the mid-1970s using fill taken from the boring of the Metro rapid transit rail line under downtown Baltimore. The site is largely level, and at its eastern end is a Memorial Park dedicated to the members of the crew of the *Pride of Baltimore* lost at sea in 1986. Along the shore of the Inner Harbor, a portion of the Baltimore Waterfront Promenade separates the recreational uses of Rash Field from the Patapsco River bulkhead and a small marina. Key Highway, a major route connecting the Inner Harbor area with developments on the north, central, and eastern parts of Locust Point, bounds Rash Field to its south.

General Area: Across the waters of the Inner Harbor are the waterfront commercial retail development known as the Inner Harbor Pavilions, beyond which lie numerous buildings constituting the central core of downtown Baltimore's commercial office district. To the south, across Key Highway, is the historic predominantly residential district known as Federal Hill, named for Federal Hill Park which overlooks Rash Field from the other side of Key Highway. To the immediate west of Rash Field are the Maryland Science Center and beyond that another residential historic district known as Otterbein. To the southeast, arrayed along the Waterfront Promenade, are various residential developments constructed in the first two decades of this century, some of which include small marinas.

HISTORY

This site is part of the Urban Renewal Area known as Inner Harbor Project I, originally approved by the Mayor and City Council by Ordinance no. 1045 dated June 15, 1967. This ordinance was last amended by its Amendment no. 19, approved by Ordinance no. 13-156 dated April 15, 2013. This site is designated as Development Area 17, on which public use with no building “except for bleachers and such other special structures” is authorized.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The proposed action is consistent with LIVE EARN PLAY LEARN, the Comprehensive Master Plan for Baltimore, Play Goal 3, Objective 1: Maintain a Well-managed System of Parks and Open Spaces, and particularly its strategy “Locate dedicated, sustainable funding sources for our parks and cultural assets.”

ANALYSIS

Background: The park of which Rash Field is a part was opened to the public in 1977. In its over 40-year history, the uses of the park have evolved as public demand for certain forms of passive or active recreation have changed over time. This included changing part of Rash Field itself from a grassed field intended for athletic uses such as amateur football or lacrosse games to its current sandy “urban beach” cover intended for amateur volleyball games.

Recently, the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, Baltimore Development Corporation, Planning Department, and Waterfront Partnership worked with a team of city officials, community leaders, and local businesses to prepare a plan to transform Rash Field into Rash Field Park. The plan has multiple phases, with its Phase I estimated to cost approximately \$17 million. Baltimore City government has committed \$9.5 million of that amount through the Capital Improvement Program already approved by the Planning Commission. An additional \$1 million is now programmed through the FY 2021 CIP, and \$4.3 million has been raised from the State of Maryland. The Waterfront Partnership committed to raising over \$2 million for this project.

One contributor from the private sector would be the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company, best known by its corporate initials BGE. In recognition of its contribution of up to \$1 million, the Waterfront Partnership proposes to name a pavilion and a nature park to be created within Rash Field Park in honor of BGE, whose shareholders would make the contribution, not the rate-payers who use electricity or natural gas provided by BGE.

It is noted that the entire redevelopment of this vital open space and recreational facility serving residents of downtown Baltimore, communities near the Inner Harbor, and all Baltimore would generate a substantial amount of employment opportunity for minority workers and businesses.

Notification: The Federal Hill Neighborhood Association and Councilman Costello have been notified of this action.



Chris Ryer

Director

