



Suburban Football Club

Working with HRM re: Field Improvements & Developments

September 29th, 2026

Over the past several years, Suburban FC members have raised concerns about the condition of the dozens of grass fields that our players train and compete on across our club's region & surrounding areas. As a club, we have engaged in several meetings, discussions & processes to solve problems with HRM across the years.

Earlier this month, HRM Councillors Cathy Deagle Gammon, Jean St-Amand, Billy Gillis and John Young invited Suburban FC to meet at City Hall on September 3rd, alongside senior HRM Parks staff Ray Walsh (Director, Parks), Chris Poole (Superintendent, Parks East) and Phillip Wright (Manager, Asset Control and Service Delivery). Suburban FC was represented by Oliver Hewish (Executive Director), Liz Struijf-Mandishora (Board of Directors - Director of Community Engagement) & Chris Oldham (Board of Directors - Director of Communications).

We are grateful to the councillors for bringing everyone to the same table, and to Parks staff for the openness and detail they brought to the conversation.

What we learned:

- HRM maintains more than 300 sports fields.
- Many of the grass fields we use are aging, and most sit on school sites where they see heavy use throughout the year.
- HRM Parks staff walked us through the current field classifications and maintenance standards, and shared the fall 2026 work already planned on fields our members use, including goal-area patching and resodding at Sackville High School, Millwood High School, Meadowbrook/Basinview and Metropolitan Avenue Park, aeration and fertilizing at Leslie Thomas Junior High, and vegetation removal along fence lines across the region.
- HRM has provided the club with the official process to submit a proposal on club-supported field maintenance, which we will be exploring for the Summer 2027 season.

What Suburban FC has committed to

- SFC will submit a written proposal to HRM Parks identifying the fields we are prepared to help maintain, the work we are able to carry out, and any safety conditions we have observed.
- Reporting through 311 - Every field safety concern our coaches and staff identify will be logged through 311 so it goes directly to the Parks team responsible for resolution and builds the record HRM uses to prioritise repairs and future investment.
- Respectful, accurate communication. We will keep our members informed, and we will keep our dialogue with HRM constructive and factual.

What HRM has committed to

- Ongoing engagement - HRM Parks will engage Suburban FC when the council-approved Playing Field Strategy is reviewed or updated, so the club and its members have a voice in how field standards evolve.
- Direct action on safety concerns. Concerns reported through 311 will be routed to the Parks team for action.
- Exploring all-weather options for future capital developments as laid out in the Playing Field Strategy

Where we go from here

- Nobody at the table believes the current state of our grass fields is where any of us want it to be, and nobody expects it to change overnight.
- What has changed is that Suburban FC and HRM now have an agreed way of working together through a shared understanding of the standards, a clear channel for raising concerns, a club commitment to contribute directly, and a seat for our members' voices in future planning.
- Suburban FC will continue to do what we have always done - put our players' safety first, mitigate conditions on the day where we must, and advocate for the facilities our community deserves.
- We are pleased to now be doing that in partnership with HRM, and we will report back to members as needed / when updates are available

A note from Oliver Hewish, Executive Director

The sport in this region is growing, and Suburban FC is growing with it. The demand on our fields goes up every season & our facilities have not kept pace, and our members know it as well as we do. Not just conditions for the sport, but access & new development.

I want to ensure we're clear on two things. First, as a club we are aware of the state of the grass fields we use, and we are doing what we can as a club to fix it, both short-term & long-term. Second, alongside that, we are (& have been) exploring every other option for better facilities, including all-weather surfaces, school and provincial partnerships, and any other route to more year-round capacity in our communities.

The HRM meeting was a good starting point. It does not solve the problem on its own, and we will keep working at this until our members have fields that match the size, direction & needs of the game in our communities.



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