
Diamond Dawgs Baseball

June 13th, 2026

To: Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council,

Subject: Urgent Issue - Preservation of the Dartmouth Commons (Arthur H. Merrick) Baseball Diamonds and Field Access for Youth Sports

I am writing to you on behalf of the Dartmouth Diamond Dawgs and Dartmouth District Minor Baseball Association (DDMBA) to formally express our profound concern regarding the proposed conversion of the Arthur H. Merrick fields at the Dartmouth Common into a dedicated cricket facility.

On February 27, 2026, HRM City Planning notified the Dartmouth Diamond Dawgs/Dartmouth District Minor Baseball Association that the Dartmouth Commons baseball diamonds (Arthur H. Merrick fields) would be converted to a cricket field. This is incredibly disappointing to our organization, and a significant loss for the community. By way of this letter, I hope to provide some further context on this issue impacting your constituency.

This concern is especially urgent because HRM's Information Report, Item No. 21.1, *Playing Field Strategy Update – Cricket Field Site Selection*, is scheduled to be presented to Regional Council on June 16, 2026, making it essential that Council fully consider the implications for displaced baseball users before the matter advances further.

This season, the Dartmouth Diamond Dawgs (DD) registration increased by over 100 players, and total Dartmouth District Minor Baseball Association (DDMBA) registration grew by over 350 players—a massive 30% increase year-over-year. The Diamond Dawgs, like other local associations within the DDMBA, had to initiate wait lists this season. We are already severely strained trying to support this growth, forcing teams to share practice fields just to give players adequate time to develop. Losing the Dartmouth Commons entirely to establish a permanent cricket field will have a devastating impact on our community, particularly our 7U Rally Cap program, which has 75 young players using those fields this season alone. Beyond the numbers, this park holds immense historical and practical value for Dartmouth:

- **100+ Years of Baseball History:** The Commons is a cornerstone of regional baseball history, dating back to landmark games in 1876. Crucially, these fields are named in honor of Arthur H. Merrick, who co-founded minor baseball in Dartmouth in 1950. When adjacent historic diamonds like Arrows Park ("Little Brooklyn") were lost to the Angus L. MacDonald Bridge development in the 1950s, the Commons was preserved as a protected green space to ensure youth baseball survived. Completely removing baseball erases a 75-year formal legacy on these specific fields, a legacy which is being capitalized on by the neighbouring Little Brooklyn [development](#).
- **Central Community Accessibility:** The central, prime location of the Commons provides unparalleled access for local families. It functions as an integrated hub where baseball operates alongside the walking paths, playground, central parking, and city transit. Removing baseball fundamentally changes the dynamic of this central park, forcing families away from a highly accessible, safe, walkable neighborhood asset to more peripheral diamonds.

HRM's report says upgrades at other Dartmouth diamonds will accommodate displaced users, but the details do not provide a guaranteed replacement for the Dartmouth Commons fields. The alternative sites discussed to date are historically underused spaces that are fundamentally unsuitable and unsafe for youth programming. For a replacement strategy to be viable, it must offer comparable value, safety, and utility to the Arthur H. Merrick fields at the Dartmouth Commons. The current alternatives fail on multiple fronts:

- **Player Safety & Conflicting Uses:** Forcing youth programming onto fields with conflicting park uses (such as active off-leash dog parks) or into neighborhoods with documented public safety concerns creates immediate liabilities for families and the municipality.
- **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** The Merrick fields provide central, established infrastructure. The proposed alternatives lack equivalent amenities - such as player capacity, spectator seating, perimeter fencing, and accessible parking.
- **Lack of Geographic Accessibility:** Displacing hundreds of children—including **75 players in our 7U division alone**—from a highly walkable, transit-accessible downtown hub to peripheral diamonds is a massive barrier for local families.

In short, the current plan removes a central youth baseball asset without securing equivalent replacement capacity. With Maybank Sports Fields effectively losing one daylight field this year and the cited improvements largely creating adult evening availability under lights, HRM has not guaranteed replacement fields for the displacement caused by converting the Dartmouth Commons diamonds.

We understand the proposed timeline now points to 2028. As this matter proceeds to Regional Council, the analysis must fully reflect the reality identified by our organizations: Dartmouth already faces a baseball diamond shortage, our registration is growing rapidly, and the off-site measures described do not guarantee equivalent replacement capacity before the Dartmouth Commons fields are displaced. We also ask that the report rigorously assess the legislative and policy framework governing the Dartmouth Common to ensure any recommendation aligns with the HRM Charter and the Dartmouth Common Master Plan:

- The Statutory Trust under the HRM Charter and Section 66(6)(e): The Dartmouth Common is held by the Municipality in trust for the benefit of local residents, strictly limiting the alienation or restriction of these lands. Removing long-standing, publicly accessible baseball diamonds to create a space that exclusively serves another sport represents a substantial restriction on public access. We believe a total conversion tests the spirit of the trust provisions set out in the Charter, which are meant to preserve open, accessible, multi-sport community recreation for the local neighborhood.
- The Master Plan explicitly outlines the Common as a "multi-functional public realm" where decisions must balance diverse community needs. A total conversion directly conflicts with the plan's core goals:
 - **Sense of Place & Heritage:** The plan directives call for celebrating the historical identity of the space. The Arthur H. Merrick fields represent a 75-year formal legacy of youth baseball built on over a century of regional sports heritage. Erasing this history completely contradicts the mandate to preserve and tell the story of the park's past.

- **Accessible Open Space:** The Master Plan requires that open spaces remain integrated hubs of daily activity. Moving hundreds of youth players away from this central asset completely undermines this objective.

In our discussion with the City Planner, we have proposed a shared-use model. While we understand preliminary technical reviews raise grading questions, with \$1 million in provincial funding on the table, the engineering challenges of a shared-use design at the Dartmouth Common may be creatively solved during the detailed design stage. Alternatively, that capital could be allocated to establish a premier, dedicated cricket facility elsewhere in the municipality *without* displacing an active, rapidly growing youth baseball population.

Since 2021, the Diamond Dawgs have invested over \$150,000 in vital upgrades to the Woodlawn (Penhorn) and Woodside (Carl Morash) Baseball complexes. Funded through Jays Care, provincial grants, and local fundraising, these improvements highlight our commitment to partnering with HRM to deliver safe, accessible, and modern facilities for local families. We welcome the opportunity to continue working collaboratively with staff, Council, and other sport communities to find a mutually beneficial solution, that does not negatively impact our growing baseball population in Dartmouth.

Our Request to Council We are not asking for cricket to be denied a home; we are asking for a solution that reflects the diverse needs of our growing municipality. Given the significance of this change to a historic public asset, and the unresolved questions around replacement capacity, accessibility, and policy compliance, we respectfully ask that this matter be brought forward for full public debate at Regional Council before any final decision or irreversible implementation steps proceed. We propose that Council direct staff to:

1. **Prioritize the Shared-Use Design:** Invest the available \$1 million in provincial funding into an innovative, shared-use layout at the Common that allows both cricket and baseball to thrive under a sophisticated, time-blocked schedule.
2. **Conduct a Comparative Site Audit:** Before any displacement occurs, provide a transparent audit comparing the safety, accessibility, and utility of the proposed replacement fields against the current Common facilities.
3. **Pause and Consult:** Halt any irreversible conversion plans until a public consultation is held that includes the local community and youth sports organizations currently occupying the space.

The growth of cricket is a positive development for HRM, but it should not be achieved by dismantling the foundation of youth baseball in Dartmouth. We invite you to meet with our Board to view the Dartmouth Commons fields and discuss how we can preserve this community asset for generations to come.

Regards,

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