

October 13, 2020

## Some things just don't come easily

Way back in 2014, the good folks of Byron, MN had an idea. Actually, they had two ideas and that's where the troubles began. But a bit of background...

Byron is a beautiful little city a few miles west of Rochester, for whom it serves as something of a bedroom community. The town has been growing quickly in the last number of years and along with the growth has come a need for enhanced parks and recreation facilities. In the early 2000's, when a development company was building a new subdivision, the City required that they provide a sizeable plot for a future city recreational park.

While Byron has a number of lovely, smaller city parks, it didn't have a large space to accommodate the team sports that require big fields such as softball, football, and baseball. While the developer's timing was bad (it went broke during the recession) the city ended up owning a 27-acre parcel to serve as a future park.

When the property became available, the City began planning for a sports complex that would provide softball, baseball, and football fields, with input from the public.



When the City gave the go-ahead to the project, WHKS engineers were asked to design the field including civil engineering, site design, irrigation, access and parking. The site was naturally a bit wet, with soft soil and some waterways through it. As natural wetland areas, they had to be mitigated in the engineering.

Once the design was complete, two contractors were retained, one for the fields and parking lot, the other for the concession building that would be located between the fields. More challenges arose as the rainy summer of 2016 seriously delayed the field and parking contractor. Since the concession building contractor couldn't even get to the building site, their work fell behind too.

When the wet summer proved too much, the City allowed the contractors to roll the project completion into the following year. But the field contractor had a long list of other commitments in 2017, which kept them from making the Byron sports complex a high priority. Construction on the site stalled even further which, again, had the domino effect on the concession building.



Finally, in the summer of 2018, the work was completed and the fields were seeded. But, as any Minnesota farmer will tell you, you can't grow 120-day corn in 100 days, so the softball and baseball players were forced to let the grass grow at its own pace while another winter went by.

Finally, after a long wait, the first pitch was thrown on the ball fields. Byron has a wonderful sports complex that includes four irrigated softball fields and a football area. The fields have covered dugouts, 300-foot fences, field lighting, genuine Shakopee red rock infields and a bike path that connects to the rest of the town. With recent grant awards, the City announced it is adding a playground to the park.

It was worth the wait.

