

Council holds off on turf decision

*Marks says City is looking at
natural grass options*

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After months of studies, angry letters and petitions opposing the City of Westmount's proposal to install synthetic turf on two Westmount Park playing fields, Mayor Karin Marks has announced that no decision will be made for the time being — but the natural grass options are being given serious consideration.

The announcement did not elicit cheers from members of Save the Park and other community activists who have come out strongly against the synthetic turf proposal.

Instead, the mayor's announcement was greeted with silence.

"No decision has been made," Marks told the assembled residents at the June city council meeting. "We are looking at all natural turf options."

Marks later confirmed to *Examiner* columnist Don Wedge that Director General Bruce St. Louis and his staff are currently looking into the matter.

"People have told us overwhelmingly that they do not want artificial turf," she said. "It is not the direction we want to go, but we are also committed to expanding the recreation programme."

"We want to know all that would be involved in staying with natural turf — not just what type of grass, but the layout of the fields, comparative costs, scheduling, usage and, in fact, every detail. Hopefully, they will find a solution that works. Only then will we make a decision."

But despite the news that the City is seriously considering the grass alternative, anti-turf activists were guarded in their reaction.

"While pleased that the City is prepared to look at natural turf options, we would like more details," said Melville Avenue resident Mavis Young, one of the most vocal opponents to the synthetic turf idea since it was first proposed last year. "For example, if they are only going to consult the people who are pushing artificial turf, that is not reassuring."

• For more details on city council's turf decision, see *Civic Alert*, page 5.