

Rink proposal combines public, private funds

By Bobby Gates – Wed, July 11, 2007

Sportsplex by the numbers

Estimated construction cost: \$8 million

Estimated annual tax bill: \$120,000

Size: 93,000 square feet

Capacity: 1,100 people

Parking spaces: 213

Discounted hourly rink rate: \$165

Years for land lease: 50

Full-time employees: 5

NHL-size rinks: 2

Tot lots: 2

Half size rinks: 1

Indoor field: 1

A plan for an \$8 million sports complex with two NHL-sized ice rinks and an indoor, athletic field was the only proposal submitted this week to develop a city-owned site near Beverly Airport.

If approved, the project could be completed by August 2008 and would become home to the Endicott College and St. John's Prep hockey programs.

Each would contribute to the cost to build the complex, according to the proposal from Innovative Sports Group, formed solely to submit the proposal.

The group's president is Peter Petri of Wenham, who heads the AAA-level Junior Raiders hockey program and who once played junior hockey in Canada and also started two insurance brokerages, Hancock Partners and American Financial Network.

A city committee, whose members have yet to be announced, will evaluate the plan against the set of criteria laid out in the original request for proposals.

"We're hoping to act on this pretty quickly," said the city's purchasing agent David Gelineau.

The proposed project has been preliminarily named the Beverly Sportsplex and Community Center, but the proposal says naming rights would be available for \$750,000.

The complex's "stadium rink" would have an 85-foot by 200-foot rink with 900 spectator seats that would be capable of hosting state tournaments and college hockey games. Another full-size rink would be included, plus a half-size rink, 85 feet by 65 feet, for learning hockey and figure skating.

The complex plan also called for a 140 foot by 80-foot indoor field that could be used for soccer, lacrosse, field hockey and other field sports.

There would also be four standard locker rooms, four full locker rooms with showers and three “varsity locker rooms” that would be rented to its most valuable user groups to establish an identity with the rink, plus a locker room suite for Endicott College.

There would be 213 parking spaces built on the property, plus the proposal says Innovative Sports Group would pave the gravel parking lot at neighboring Birch Plains Park (the former Vitale site) and use the 151 parking spaces there for overflow parking.

The complex’s major financial backer would be Endicott College, which would contribute \$2.5 million towards construction. St. John’s Prep in Danvers would also donate \$750,000 towards construction, according to the proposal.

Endicott President Richard Wylie and St. John’s headmaster Albert Shannon have both given the group a verbal commitment for the funding, subject to approval from each school’s board of trustees.

Wylie wrote to the group saying, “There are many opportunities for synergies between the center and the college.”

Shannon said he endorses the project and is “interested in exploring the possibilities of using the arena for our varsity, sub-varsity and intramural programs.”

An anonymous donor would contribute \$1 million and a \$3 million loan from Beverly Cooperative Bank would make up the bulk of the remaining funding.

A \$50,000 grant from Beverly Cooperative Bank and a \$100,000 federal energy grant would also be used, as would a \$250,000 investment from the Petri and Lowe families. Another \$350,000 in personal and corporate fundraising is also being planned.

The group’s offer on lease payments has also been submitted but is being kept sealed until the committee reviews the proposal.

Innovative Sports Group said it estimates the project would pay about \$120,000 a year in real estate taxes, but would save the city a total of \$350,000 annually in its budget because the charges for rink time would be 31 percent lower than the schools are currently paying.

The rink would also generate \$1.5 million in ancillary spending at area stores, restaurants and hotels by the people who would arrive for games, tournaments and other special events, according to the proposal.

The complex would employ five full-time workers and 20 part-timers.

In addition to Endicott College and St. John's Prep — who would be “core tenants” — other users would likely include Beverly High School, Hamilton-Wenham Middle School, Ipswich Middle School and the Junior Raiders, according to the proposal.

Beverly groups would be given all the prime ice time on rink one and a discounted rental rate.

The average hourly rental rate for an ice rink is \$216 per hour, with \$235 being the average of rinks similar to the proposed Sportsplex, including rinks at Governor's Academy in Byfield, Johnson Rink at the Pingree School, Harrison Rink at Phillips Andover and the Valley Forum in Lawrence.

“This is a sweetheart of a deal for the city, not only is it near impossible to get prime ice time anymore but at a discounted rate of \$165,” the proposal said.

The building would also have a concession stand and possibly a Dunkin' Donuts. There would also be skate rentals available for public skating times.

The Sportsplex proposal was the only one submitted for the 6.4-acre site, even though seven bid packages were requested from the city.

Mayor Bill Scanlon said earlier this year that about six prospective rink owners and operators had approached him and “shown a strong interest.”

This week, Scanlon said he heard from one group that had planned to submit a proposal but “significant financial backers” had pulled out.

“We were hearing that there might be two or three responses but we only got the one,” Scanlon said.

The complex could open by August 2008, something that is “a very realistic goal if the proposal is accepted and ISG is chosen no later than the middle of August,” according to the proposal.

The proposal calls for the rink and indoor field complex to be connected to the neighboring Birch Plains Park by a footpath, with two “tot lot” play areas to be built in between.

There would be a driveway from LP Henderson Road and three driveways off of Nike Road, a side road from LP Henderson Road

Innovative Sports Group said it would build a berm with leafy plants on top to shield the complex's view from LP Henderson Road.

To the north plants would be planted to create a “forest feel.” Petri, the group's principal, lives nearly within sight of the site, just over the town line in Wenham.

“We are all local residents that would like to see this done right,” the proposal said.