

**MINUTES
CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
April 21, 1998**

PRESENT

Ken Salzberg
Wendy Treadwell
Wayne Groff
Irene Struck
Toni Middleton
Tom Brace
Paul Kuettel

ALSO PRESENT

Susan Hoyt, City Administrator
Sue Gehrz, Mayor

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Treadwell.

**APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 18, 1997 AND MARCH 17, 1998 PLANNING
COMMISSION MINUTES**

A motion was made by Commissioner Salzberg, seconded by Commissioner Brace, to approve the minutes of the November 18, 1997 and March 17, 1998 planning commission meetings. The motion passed unanimously.

**PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED UNIVERSITY OF
MINNESOTA WOMEN'S SOCCER STADIUM**

Administrator Hoyt reported that the University of Minnesota has plans to construct a women's soccer stadium on the southwest corner of Cleveland and Larpenteur Avenues to the south of the Gibbs schoolhouse. The University gave a presentation on this subject to a neighborhood group on April 13, 1998. Hoyt noted that the City of Falcon Heights does not land use authority over University property; the state constitution gives this authority to the University Regents. Although the city cannot approve, deny, or regulate the land use, it can comment on the proposal.

Tom Hoffoss, from the University's Facilities Management department, gave an overview of the development plans. The stadium would be used for eight to eleven women's intercollegiate soccer games per year. The new stadium would seat 1,000 spectators in permanent bleachers, with the possibility of expanding to 1,500 spectator seats in the future. The two story, 8000 square foot facility would have permanent ticketing, press box, team rooms, and restroom facilities instead of the temporary bleachers, portable bathrooms, and portable speakers now brought into the site for game days. A ticket entrance would be located at the northwest corner of the site. The entire field would be enclosed by an eight foot high cyclone fence and a permanent public address system will be installed. There are no plans to light

the field or to rent the facility to outside groups. Parking would be accommodated in nearby contract lots, Gibbs Farm, and the University Golf Course. University officials have estimated that 160 parking spaces would be available on game days. Several other sites were considered for this project, but Hoffoss reported that these had financial and physical restraints. The plan for the project is to have it approved by the Regents in June, 1998 with bids awarded in November, 1998 and the facility open for use in August, 1999.

Commissioner Salzberg asked if the east-west gravel road area on the southern part of the property was proposed to be enclosed by the fence. Hoffoss answered that this was not planned and that there was no plan to remove any vegetation on the site.

Chair Treadwell asked about the provisions taken for control of pedestrian traffic to the site. Hoffoss replied that when the site is completely fenced, pedestrians will be forced to use the entrance on Cleveland Avenue to access the site rather than accessing it from the back and trespassing on private property.

Commissioner Middleton asked about the potential use of the greenhouse and schoolhouse properties for parking and about provisions taken to improve the aesthetics of the site. Hoffoss answered that the greenhouse is not available for parking and that the University's calculations show that further parking is not needed.

He also said that the University intends to do some landscaping on the site in the future, as funding permits.

Commissioner Kuettel asked if the University had considered using the soccer facilities in Blaine or the Metrodome for their games. Donna Olson, Assistant Director of Women's Athletics, replied that the distance to the Blaine facility makes it unsuitable for the University of Minnesota team. The Metrodome is not an option because intercollegiate soccer cannot be played on Astro turf.

Commissioner Kuettel asked about lighting on the site and if the University was willing to guarantee that the site would never be lighted. Olson answered that she cannot guarantee the actions of the University forever, but it does not make sense from their perspective to light the site because the soccer season runs from September through November, when the weather is not conducive to playing games at night. The present game schedule has games on Friday and Sunday afternoons.

Commissioner Kuettel left the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Chair Treadwell opened the meeting for public comment.

Bob Anderson, 1666 Coffman Street, stated that he hopes that a task force of affected parties can be formed and that a "win-win" situation will be the result.

Marian Watson, 2140 W. Hoyt Avenue, St. Paul, stated he has concerns about the parking calculations presented. The University's calculations of 160 parking spaces for 1500 people means that people would need to come to the site with 10 people in a car. Watson encouraged Falcon Heights to control for on-street parking and to require an Environmental Assessment Worksheet to assess the noise that would occur.

Frank Digangi, 1666 Coffman Street, suggested that the alternative sites studied be re-evaluated and that plans for the greenhouses on Larpenteur Avenue be considered as well.

Sheila Richter, 2132 Folwell Avenue, expressed her support for equal facilities for women's sports. However, she also stated her belief that this is a bad location for further development due to its close proximity to residential sites. The recreational and intramural games played at the site do not cause problems, but the noise level during the intercollegiate games is very bad and keeps her from using her back yard.

Gertrude Esteros, 1666 Coffman Street, stated that since this is a long term use of the land, the long term impacts and constraints for both the University program and the neighborhood need to be known.

John Turner, 1576 Vincent Street, opposes the project due to the additional traffic volume, the inevitable parking shortages, and the unappealing look of an eight foot high fence. He believes that the facility will not add to the area's property values and that it is inappropriate to place this kind of facility next to a multi-family building of retired people. Finally, Turner remarked that since most, if not all, of Falcon Heights' future development issues will be with the University, an institutionalized process for reviewing University development should be established.

Barbara Lukerman, 2211 Folwell Avenue, noted that an intercollegiate stadium is not included in the 1996 University Master Plan. The plan specifies recreational, not competitive, sports for this location. Lukerman stated that women's soccer deserves a stadium that will meet the long-term needs of its program and this site will not do that. She suggested that Ken Greenberg, a planning consultant who assisted the University with its Master Plan, meet with University officials, city officials, and concerned citizens to determine if this is an appropriate use for the site. She further suggested that the city request that an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (less detailed than an Environmental Impact Statement) be completed by the University to determine the impacts of the site on the surrounding area.

Ken Winters, 1575 Northrop Street, President of the University Grove Homeowner's Association, read and submitted a suggested resolution of concern for the planning commission's consideration. The resolution read: "Aware of our responsibilities for planning and development within the structure of government of the City of Falcon Heights, we wish to express our concern about the University's plan to develop further a women's soccer field in the proposed location. In our view, the plans are

freighted with serious consequences for the residential neighborhood. A more desirable form of action would be for the University to look for and discover an alternative site. In addition, we strongly urge the City of Falcon Heights to undertake an Environmental Assessment Worksheet, with special focus on the traffic and parking difficulty, the noise factor, and other hazards to the residential area. Such an Assessment would document the possible impact of the proposed facility upon the entire residential area."

Donna Olson, Assistant Director of Women's Athletics, commented that the University has entered into this process in good faith and is willing to meet with a task force of concerned citizens.

Marcell Richter, 2132 Folwell Avenue, commented that the current time frame does not give concerned citizens much time to have input. He asked that, in the spirit of cooperation, the University pull this item off of its Regent's agenda to allow time for sufficient resident consideration.

Gertrude Esteros, 1666 Coffman Street, noted that the proposed stadium is not an ideal facility in that the student-athletes still have to be housed on the Minneapolis campus, since this is where their locker rooms would be located, and then be bussed over to the site.

Maynard Reynolds, 1666 Coffman Street, asked the athletic department to consider incorporating the greenhouse and schoolhouse properties into the larger schematic when planning for the site.

Ann Mullholland, 2129 Folwell Avenue, spoke in favor of asking the University preparing an Environmental Assessment Worksheet.

The commission recessed for a break at 9:00 p.m. and reconvened at 9:05 p.m.

Nancy Meeden, 2243 Folwell Avenue, expressed concern that an upgraded facility will encourage more extensive use of the property and that it would be used for more than eight to eleven games a year. She also expressed doubt that people would want to walk to the stadium from parking lots several blocks away.

John Turner, 1576 Vincent Street, asserted that the site is not good for the women's soccer program due to limited room for expansion and the need to bus the student-athletes from the Minneapolis campus.

Marian Watson, 2140 W. Hoyt Avenue, St. Paul, stated that people aren't very aware of the soccer field except during game days. Since the temporary bleachers, ticket booth, and toilets are removed during non-game days, the area doesn't look like an athletic facility. If the permanent improvements are done, the facility's presence will be very obvious. She fears a decrease in local property values.

Marcell Richter, 2132 Folwell Avenue, explained that sports departments at the University are under pressure to support themselves. He is afraid that this stadium will be used more often than for an occasional intercollegiate soccer game. He does not object to intramural and "pickup" games played at the site, but the competitive games have been very noisy.

Gertrude Esteros, 1666 Coffman Street, stated that when the condominiums were built, there was an understanding with the University that the playing fields would remain open, recreational green space. There was no indication at that time that there would be a stadium on the site.

There being no one further wishing to speak, a motion was made by Commissioner Brace, seconded by Commissioner Struck, to close the public testimony portion of the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Following discussion, the planning commission adopted the following recommendations.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brace, seconded by Commissioner Salzberg, to adopt the following recommendation to the city council. The motion passed unanimously.

The planning commission supports the creation of a task force on the proposed soccer development with representatives from the University of Minnesota, the City of Falcon Heights, the Grove neighborhood, the 1666 Coffman Condominium Association, and surrounding communities impacted by the facility. The task force is asked to consider, but not be limited to, reviewing the following: parking, pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow, noise from the site, aesthetics of the site, the long term suitability of the site for an intercollegiate women's soccer facility, coordination with other uses including the Gibbs schoolhouse and the greenhouse properties on the southwest corner of Cleveland and Larpenteur, and the appropriateness of the mix of the land use between competitive intercollegiate soccer activities with abutting residential properties.

A motion was made by Commissioner Salzberg, seconded by Commissioner Brace, to adopt the following recommendation to the city council. The motion passed unanimously.

The planning commission encourages the city council to establish a formal relationship and better communication with the University of Minnesota on planning issues.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brace, seconded by Commissioner Groff, to adopt the following recommendation to the city council. The motion passed unanimously.

The planning commission acknowledges the receipt of the resolution from the representatives of the Grove Association and the 1666 Coffman Condominium Association and encourages the city council to review the proposed resolution and the full impact that the proposed facility would have on the neighborhood.

**INFORMATION ON THE PROPOSED PARKING FACILITY ON THE ST. PAUL
(FALCON HEIGHTS) CAMPUS**

A motion was made by Commissioner Salzberg, seconded by Commissioner Middleton, to table this item to the May commission meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Salzberg, seconded by Commissioner Groff, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan Hoyt
City Administrator/Recording Secretary