



April 24, 2009

Sam Adams, Mayor
City Council
City Hall
1220 SW Fourth Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

Mayor Adams and Commissioners,

After reading several accounts regarding MLS and siting of the baseball stadium and today's story, *Lents is back in play for baseball* in *The Oregonian*, I want to reiterate some of the recommendations that the taskforce made to City Council and to share a few thoughts of my own, now that what seemed at the time like a "house of cards" is even more problematic. As I noted in my earlier testimony, my affirmative vote was predicated on the city adopting all of the conditions set by the committee, including:

1). **Taking Public Park Land:** From the beginning myself and other park advocates have been adamantly opposed to taking precious public park land for other uses. I have consistently opposed the use of Lents Park not because the current stadium would be replaced with a new facility with a similar footprint, but because 500 parking spaces and ancillary buildings would take several acres of precious public park land in an already park deficient area of the city.

The taskforce discussed this issue at length. The following language was voted on and approved by a majority of the taskforce: **"No open space land in a public park will be taken for use in the project.** If no alternative exists to using open space land in a public park, the project costs will include funds to purchase or develop and to maintain equivalent open space land for public use in the same area of the City."

Another critical element of the recommendations was that the taskforce embraced the concept of "no net loss" of park land when it adopted the second piece of the park related recommendation: "No open space land in a public park will be taken for use in the project. **If no alternative exists to using open space land in a public park, the project costs will include funds to purchase or develop and to maintain equivalent open space land for public use in the same area of the City.**"

2). **Comparisons Between Lents Park and Memorial Coliseum:** The report's financial analysis of cost comparisons between building a new

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baseball stadium at Lents Park and Memorial Coliseum are flawed. The report asserts that the funding gap at Lents Park would be \$18 million, whereas the gap at the Coliseum site would be \$37 million. The fact is, if the above condition of “no net loss” were applied the cost of acquiring replacement park land at approximately \$4 to \$6 million and development of that land at approximately \$5 to \$8 million, then the two sites are more fairly compared as to true costs.

3). **Baseball Site Recommendations:** The taskforce sent you the following criteria for site selection of the baseball facility:

a). Ease of financing: lower cost is better. What the committee added to this statement at the final meeting is consistent with the issue of replacing park land and developing it under the “no net loss” tenet: **“The value of city-owned land, including the cost of acquiring and developing replacement parkland if necessary, should be treated as a cost and incorporated into the assessment of alternative sites.”**

b). Access: The baseball stadium should be located in an area of the City easily reached by (added language: **light rail, bus, and other alternative modes**) for people who attend baseball games (added language: **to reduce reliance on the automobile, reduce greenhouse gases**) and to maximize attendance.” To reduce greenhouse gases was for some reason left out of the final draft, but my recollection is it was in our final language adopted by the taskforce.

c). Highest and best use of the land (added language: **from the City’s land use and urban design perspective**): Consider all feasible sites, public and private; construction of the AAA stadium preferably would not preclude construction of a MLB stadium.”

While the Coliseum site may well prove to be problematic, the Lents Park site is equally problematic if Council takes the taskforce’s recommendations seriously. If the MLS deal continues to have the support of Council, I urge you to seek a replacement baseball stadium site that meets all of the taskforce’s criteria, including a true cost-benefit analysis, including the cost of acquiring the necessary land, and that does not necessitate the taking of existing park land.

Respectfully,



Mike Houck,
Executive Director

