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Arenas

ROSEN DROPS OPPOSITION TO ORLANDO ARENA

Orlando, Fla. – Hotelier Harris Rosen has given up his battle against a new Orlando Magic arena, even as the city approved \$340 million in financing for the project.

The International Drive hotel magnate couldn't find many people willing to sign his petition to stop the construction of the arena and upgrades to the Florida Citrus Bowl, said Steve Braun, a Rosen employee who was leading the petition drive. With time running out and only a fraction of the 30,000 signatures collected, the venues' most vocal critic decided to throw in the towel.

"I met with him, and he said, 'If the people in Orlando want it and they feel they have made an educated decision, so be it.' He was backing down," said Braun, adding that there are no plans for a legal challenge either.

Rosen's decision removes another hurdle for the \$1.1 billion plan to build the sports venues and a new performing-arts center downtown.

Also this week, the City Council voted unanimously to authorize \$340 million in bonds to help pay for the arena's construction. The bonds – the largest amount approved so far – will be repaid over 30 years from hotel-tax collections.

The Magic sealed the deal with a promise to build five community gymnasiums around Orange County.

The gyms, valued at \$25 million, were once part of a public-works package that fell victim this year to statewide property-tax cuts.

The team agreed to revive the gyms and cover half the costs during negotiations with Orange leaders this summer about the \$1.1 billion downtown sports- and arts-venue plan that also includes a new performing-arts center and renovated Florida Citrus Bowl. Magic owners plan to raise the other half of the gym-construction costs from private sources.

One remaining uncertainty comes from the Florida Supreme Court, which in September ruled in an Escambia County case that voters should have a say on big-ticket items financed with property taxes, as a portion of the performing-arts center would be. The court held a rehearing in October on the case, which has caused ripples across the state, but has not yet issued a final ruling. (*Orlando Sentinel*)

PREDATORS HAVE DEAL ON NASHVILLE ARENA

Nashville, Tenn. – After almost seven weeks of sometimes difficult negotiations, the investors who plan to buy the Predators struck a deal with Mayor Karl Dean's administration to change the pro hockey team's arena lease.

If two Metro boards approve in the next few weeks, the mostly local ownership group hopes to buy the Predators from Craig Leipold for \$193 million next month. Under the new lease, they would have to keep the Predators in town at least three years, and couldn't pull out before five years unless attendance was low and they were losing money.

Staying here longer than that will require raising the team's attendance and turning the Predators into a moneymaker after years of operating losses. Leipold has estimated his losses at \$70 million since the team started play in 1998, and the buyers said they needed a better lease to have a chance to turn things around.

David Freeman, the buyer group's leader, said he and his fellow buyers don't have any magical way to get more people to come to the Predators' games, but he hopes their local ties will make a difference.

"I don't think anybody in the group claims to be a marketing whiz," said Freeman, CEO of 36 Venture Capital. "I don't think anybody claims to know the answer." (*The Tennessean*)

LINCOLN SEEKS ARENA DEVELOPERS

Lincoln, Neb. – The city is officially advertising for developers interested in being part of a possible new arena and convention hotel west of the Haymarket District.

The city Urban Development Department is advertising an "invitation for redevelopment proposals" with regard to a possible new arena and convention hotel in Lincoln.

Proposals are due Feb. 15, after which the city will choose a favorite proposal within six weeks.

Then the developer and city would negotiate a deal by late 2008 or early 2009, according to the city advertisement. However, the invitation to developers contains a caveat that the whole thing is subject to a public vote, as requested by Mayor Chris Beutler.

The city whole project will cost \$200 million to \$300 million. Developers can submit proposals for any part of the project that interests them, whether that be the convention center/hotel or arena. The arena is expected to hold 13,000 to 16,000 seats and up to 20 luxury suites and 600 club seats, as recommended by an outside consultant.

The convention center is expected to be 45,000 to 65,000 square feet, but designed to allow future expansion. The development and operation of the convention center could be handled by the developer or with city participation.

The "upper-tier" hotel is expected to have 350 to 450 rooms, although all numbers are subject to change.

The city will purchase the land for the project, possibly with assistance from 2015 Vision, a private group of business leaders. The city also will work to relocate businesses, if necessary.

The invitation to developers was made by the Urban Development Department, which will oversee the selection of a developer. Normally, the city purchasing department handles request for proposals, but in recent years the Urban Development Department has handled these types of economic development projects. (*Lincoln Journal Star*)

OILERS SIGN BOK CENTER LEASE

Tulsa, Okla. – The Tulsa Oilers have signed a 10-season contract to play hockey at the new BOK Center, officials said.

The agreement begins with the 2008 season and guarantees the arena, which is set to open in September, a minimum of \$3.2 million in rent over the period.

The Oilers will pay the BOK Center \$10,000 to \$15,000 per game in rent, depending on which day of the week they play. A typical season has about 32 home games, plus any playoff games.

The rent will be adjusted for inflation regularly.

The rental fee is considerably more than the \$1,500 to \$2,500 per game the team pays at the Convention Center.

But the arena's club seats, loge boxes and suites will provide the Oilers with \$22,500 per game in secured revenue.

If the team grosses \$2.25 million in ticket sales for a season, the BOK Center will get a per-game rental bonus.

And if \$2.5 million is reached, the venue will get 30 percent of the ticket revenue from seats in the upper level, plus the rental bonus.

The Oilers average about 5,000 spectators per game, but team officials hope that number will increase in the BOK Center.

The Oilers will receive 100 percent of team merchandise revenue and 20 percent of concessions, which is the same deal they have at the Convention Center.

The team has agreed to an \$8,000-per-year fee to the venue to help pay for the making of new ice each season.

A section of the contract gives the venue and the team the ability to exit the contract about every three years. (*Tulsa World*)

SUITES SELL WELL FOR WINDSOR ARENA

Windsor, Ontario – About one-third of the new east-end Windsor Family Credit Union Centre's 31 private suites, ranging in price from C\$27,000 to more than C\$41,000 annually, have been spoken for, according to Windsor Spitfires spokesman and co-owner Pete Dobrich.

Dobrich said that there's also been "considerable" interest in 10 other suites, with a number of companies either seeking partners or working with partners the Spitfires have connected them with.

"We fully expect that all will be leased once the process is completed in a few weeks," said Dobrich.

There will be 31 suites in the new arena, including four premium suites which carry an additional cost of C\$10,000 per year.

The team staged a private party last week for companies which showed initial interest in the suites and also unveiled the prices, which range from C\$27,826 annually for a 10-year term to C\$31,452 annually for a five-year term, not including a C\$10,000 surcharge for the premium suites.

Included in the cost are license fees, a city surcharge, taxes and 14 season tickets to 34 regular-season games plus three pre-season games.

It's expected that the arena will be completed by January 2009. (*Windsor Star*)

Ballparks

DEVIL RAYS SHOW BALLPARK PLANS

St. Petersburg, Fla. – The Devil Rays showed off plans this week for the 34,000-seat retractable-roof ballpark planned on the site of Al Lang Field.

The ballpark will feature 360 degree circulation, air-conditioned concourses with open views to the playing field, the smallest upper deck in baseball, and a new public park that will link the waterfront park system to the north of the ballpark with the emerging cultural district to its south.

The ballpark design also includes a unique retractable roof which will shield the playing field and fans from the elements yet still maintain an intimate environment. The roof will be comprised of a light weatherproof fabric that will be pulled along cables that are suspended between arches on one end and a central mast structure on the other. It will take approximately 8 minutes to open or close the roof, and, even when the roof is deployed, the feel of an open-air ballpark will be maintained. The Rays have worked with a team of architects and engineers, led by HOK Sport, on the design. The total cost for the ballpark is estimated to be \$450 million.

The team is studying a plan to use city and county property tax dollars from the redevelopment of Tropicana Field to raise money for a \$450 million ballpark, according to documents released by the city.

Those tax dollars could raise nearly \$150 million by 2035, based on the Rays' projections.

Thanks to a city tax program in place since 1982, the local tax revenue generated by such a development must be used on capital improvements downtown anyway. But questions remain. Would the city and county agree to it? Could the Rays get the money in a lump sum up front?

In a letter to the city, Michael Kalt, senior vice president for development and business affairs, said the ballpark, "must pay for itself through a combination of private funds and new taxes generated by the redevelopment of the Tropicana Field site."

Rays principal owner Stuart Sternberg has pledged up to \$150 million toward the cost of a new venue. The team also is interested in requesting a \$60 million sales tax subsidy from the state.

That leaves the team looking for \$240 million.

The Rays hope to capitalize on a city tax program in place for 25 years for at least some of the funds. The tax increment financing program was created to pump city and county tax dollars into capital projects in the area where the taxes are paid.

Under the district's rules, city and county property taxes collected on the redeveloped Tropicana site could be redirected to help pay construction costs at the new ballpark. The money also could help fund infrastructure or road repairs, or build a parking garage. It could not be used for most personnel costs, including police officers, or most city programs. And it cannot be spent outside the tax district.

The special district was to expire in 2012. But Mayor Rick Baker persuaded Pinellas County commissioners in 2005 to extend the program until 2035.

The Rays plan to conduct extensive public outreach to present plans and gather feedback on all aspects of these developments. Hines, a development firm working with the team, must also compete for the rights to redevelop the Tropicana Field site through a request for proposal process managed by the City. In addition to the RFP process on the Tropicana Field site, the City Council would also need to approve adding to the November 2008 ballot a referendum to authorize the construction of the new ballpark on the site of Al Lang Field.

Following referendum approval, construction on both sites is anticipated to begin in mid-2009, with the new ballpark ready by Opening Day 2012. The retail, commercial, and housing development on the Tropicana Field site is scheduled to open in 2011 and continue through approximately 2013. (*St. Petersburg Times*, Devil Rays)

DEVIL RAYS SHOW PLANS FOR TRAINING FACILITY UPGRADE

Charlotte, Fla. – The Tampa Bay Devil Rays' new spring training facility will incorporate many of the hottest trends in ballpark design, giving the team and fans one of the top facilities in the state.

Plans for the \$27 million renovation feature a children's play area known as the Kid Zone and a tiki bar in center field. The two areas will be linked by a circular boardwalk that allows fans to walk around the entire complex.

Other features – including an "autograph alley," a team store and individual seating – are all part of a fan-friendly design that team officials say will enhance the spring training experience.

"We tried to maximize the things that are great about spring training," said Devil Rays spokesman Michael Kalt.

If the commission approves the project, it will break ground later in the month. Completion is set for early 2009.

The state gave \$15 million grants to five cities and counties for new or existing ballparks this year, with Bradenton and Sarasota also making the list. The Devil Rays are using the state grant and \$4 million of their own money to renovate the venue. The county is paying for the rest through an increase, from 4 percent to 5 percent, in the tourism tax charged on hotel rooms and short-term condo rentals. (*Sarasota Herald Tribune*)

PLANS CONTINUE FOR SUBURBAN KANSAS CITY BALLPARK

Lee's Summit, Mo. – Developer David Gale's effort to bring a minor-league baseball team to Lee's Summit is going into its final innings.

Gale said he hopes to reach a conclusion to talks with the Metropolitan Community College about building a ballpark at the Longview campus. He is planning meetings with city, county and

college officials to throw his last pitches for a \$14 million plan to bring a Frontier League team to the Southland.

It would be the shared home of a minor-league team, the college's Longview Lakers baseball team, and some games of Kansas City's Ban Johnson League, an amateur summer league for young men that's looking for a permanent home.

If he wins approval, Gale hopes for an opening day of Memorial Day 2009.

Principal owners of the minor-league team would include Gale and James E. Smith, who had a brief career as a New York Yankees pitcher and is chairman of Hawthorn Bank, which has its headquarters in Lee's Summit. Gale is the developer of several large, high-profile Lee's Summit subdivisions.

The City Council has agreed to add a question to its annual resident survey asking whether the city should spend tax money on a ballpark.

Gale is proposing a 3,200-seat ballpark – 5,000 with berm seating – that would be owned by the college but leased and managed by Gale's team. Under his proposal, the college would issue \$8 million in bonds for building the venue, with the city contributing \$2 million to the college for construction costs.

Gale's organization, Kansas City Southland Baseball LLC, would guarantee the bonds, using some financial device such as a letter of credit. The remaining \$4 million would come from private sources. (*Kansas City Star*)

Stadiums

COWBOYS BEGIN PSL SALES

Dallas, Texas – The Dallas Cowboys are seeking top dollar for season tickets in their new stadium now under construction. The most expensive will cost \$340 per ticket per game with a \$150,000 seat license fee.

Greg McElroy, the Cowboys' senior vice president of sales and marketing, said he wasn't worried about pricing out longtime fans.

"There are so many options in the new stadium, we think we'll be able to accommodate most people," he said.

"There's a lot of excitement about the team with a new quarterback and a new coach. The demand for Cowboys tickets is at an all-time high."

McElroy said the Cowboys have been studying stadium ticket and suite packages for 18 months. He said the top-tier Founders Club seats – which number about 1,000 and are located near owner Jerry Jones' luxury suite – are comparable to courtside Mavericks tickets or front-row seats at Yankee Stadium.

McElroy said the current round of seat license sales are just for the high-dollar, lower-bowl seats. He said more seats would be available next year in the upper deck at a lower price, although those prices are not yet available.

According to Cowboys documents, the seat licenses in the lower bowl could be purchased for \$16,000 to \$150,000 and grant the owner the right to buy those tickets for the next 30 years. Tickets cost \$340 for each of the team's 10 guaranteed home games – eight in the regular season and two in the preseason.

The team has mailed information packets to the 15,000 holders of the team's 60,000 season tickets outlining how to get first dibs on similar seats at the new stadium.

Season ticket holders who currently have the best seats at Texas Stadium – in the lower bowl – will get the first shot at similar ones in the Cowboys' new home.

The 15,000 club seats will be located on both sides of the field. Seats will be cushioned and roomier (21 inches wide compared with 19 inches for the regular seat) and come with access to premium parking, air-conditioned clubs and upscale dining options.

Texas Stadium has no such premium seats now, making price comparisons difficult, team officials say. But tickets for similarly located seats cost \$129 this season.

Team officials say they want to sell season tickets for every one of the stadium's 80,000 seats, each with a seat option. The Cowboys haven't announced costs beyond the club seats, but prices will go down from there.

Season ticket holders in the current upper bowl and end-zone areas will be able to put in their bid for seats in February.

Non-season ticket holders will get their chance to buy a season seat in June. Those fans can get on a waiting list in December.

The Cowboys will use the seat options to help pay for their \$675 million share of the stadium.

For the last year, the Cowboys have focused on selling suites in the new stadium – starting at \$100,000 for 20 years – to existing customers. The Cowboys have sold well over half the 200 available suites and have begun courting new customers for the rest. (*Dallas Morning News*)

SAN FRANCISCO RENEWS PUSH FOR 49ERS

San Francisco, Calif. – Sen. Dianne Feinstein has signed on to lead next June's ballot campaign aimed at revitalizing Candlestick Point and keeping the 49ers in San Francisco.

Joining Feinstein as co-chairs of the campaign: former Mayor Willie Brown and Hunters Point-area Supervisor Sophie Maxwell.

Word that Feinstein will join the cause comes a few weeks after Mayor Gavin Newsom tapped former 49ers executive Carmen Policy to act as civic go-between with the team and the National Football League.

The 49ers are still intent on moving to Santa Clara, despite objections of Cedar Fair, the company that runs Great America and whose parking lot the team has been eyeing for its stadium.

In the meantime, San Francisco officials are rolling ahead with a ballot measure asking voters to approve a mixed-use development at Candlestick Point, along with the possibility of a new stadium at the former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard.

The NFL is also getting involved in San Francisco's effort. The league hired Icon Venue Group, a sports and entertainment development firm that helped build Denver's new Invesco Field football stadium, to work on San Francisco's project. The company is partly owned by Philip Anschutz. (*San Francisco Chronicle*)

NEW BIRMINGHAM MAYOR SEEKS TAX FOR STADIUM

Birmingham, Ala. – Birmingham Mayor Larry Langford has proposed raising the sales tax in the city by 1 cent on the dollar and doubling business license fees to pay for his plans to build a domed stadium, improve mass transit, support economic development, improve the police and fire departments, and other programs.

The new revenues generated would be used to support \$500 million in bonds to build the dome and to match federal dollars available to improve the Metro Area Express transit system. Langford's plan would provide \$25 million annually for mass transit.

Langford's proposal is projected to bring in \$72 million annually – \$36 million each from the sales tax and license fees – and be used to pay off bonds to build the domed stadium, according to council members. The sales and use tax increase would last for six years. Langford said the plan has a \$1.35 billion economic impact.

The city has been considering plans for a \$600 million, 72,000-seat domed stadium and a separate 25,000-seat arena. It's not clear if the new plan would include the arena. (*Birmingham News*)

HOUSTON CLOSE TO SOCCER VENUE DEAL

Houston, Texas – The Houston Dynamo hope to close a deal with the city for a new stadium in the next few weeks, but in the meantime, Major League Soccer has been putting pressure on the team's owner, Anschutz Entertainment Group, to sell the franchise. AEG also owns a franchise in Los Angeles.

Such a sale would not alter AEG's plan to form a private-public partnership within weeks with the city to build a downtown soccer stadium because the deal would include an agreement that the team wouldn't move, said city and Dynamo officials.

But the bid by AEG – the nation's second-biggest concert promoter – to build a stadium faces a potential legal hurdle. Houston Rockets Chief Executive Tad Brown said the team's lease at Toyota Center prohibits the city from promoting or helping build a rival venue that would stage concerts.

But the provision expires in 2013, three years after the soccer stadium likely would open, giving AEG the option of waiting out the Rockets if they do not agree to waive it.

Icken said the city understands that AEG intends to stage concerts at the stadium, but the city's lawyers have assured him that the proposed stadium deal would not violate the Rockets' lease.

AEG hopes to build a 22,000-seat, open-air stadium that would cost \$70 million to \$80 million. The team's preferred location is between the George R. Brown Convention Center and Minute Maid Park.

MLS Commissioner Don Garber weighed in on the issue days before the championship match. "Houston will soon have a new owner," he told the *New York Times*.

Garber, during an interview with the *Houston Chronicle*, said his comment to the *Times* was merely another instance of his urging owners to own only one team. It would be "very speculative and inappropriate," he said, for anybody to suggest that a sale of the Dynamo is imminent.

AEG's deal in Houston calls for the company to bear the "preponderance" of stadium construction costs, but the company has pressed the city to pay for millions of dollars in needed infrastructure improvements.

AEG once owned six MLS teams. But it sold the Colorado Rapids in 2003 and over the last two years, it has sold three of them – the Chicago Fire, D.C. United and New York MetroStars, who became the Red Bulls – because the league wants owners to own only one team. (*Houston Chronicle*)

RED BULL TAKES FULL CONTROL OF STADIUM PROJECT

Harrison, N.J. – Red Bull New York has gained total control of the new soccer stadium being build in Harrison, purchasing the Anschutz Entertainment Group's 50 percent interest in the development of Red Bull Park, the team announced.

Red Bull New York now will oversee all aspects of construction and stadium management on the 25,000-seat stadium that has a projected completion in 2009.

Red Bull New York hired John Amorosa as the construction manager for overseeing the building of Red Bull Park and the Red Bulls Training Grounds in Hanover Township.

AEG, which owns MLS' Los Angeles Galaxy and Houston Dynamo, also owned the Red Bulls, previously called the MetroStars, from 2001-2006, selling its interest to Austrian energy drink maker Red Bull in March last year.

It renamed the team Red Bull New York, although the league said the team would informally be known as the New York Red Bulls.

As part of the sale, AEG had retained a 50 percent interest in the development of the new stadium and was in charge of building and operating the facility. (AP)

LIONS' GAME WAS CARBON NEUTRAL

Detroit, Mich. – Ford Field became the first NFL stadium to host a 100 percent carbon-neutral game on Thanksgiving day when the Lions faced the Green Bay Packers.

The carbon neutral event offset 1,866,000 of GHG (Green House Gas) /CO2 emissions by using fewer cars at the game and reducing electrical use.

"They wanted to be the first NFL football stadium to go green," said Dona Dolkowski, director of operations for Carbon Credit Environmental Services Inc.

Dolkowski said fans enjoyed a normal game-day experience. The only difference was they ate food from biodegradable containers and found information in the stands and concourse to promote helping the environment. (*Detroit News*)

PACKERS BEGIN ACQUIRING LAND NEAR STADIUM

Green Bay, Wis. – The Green Bay Packers are prepared to purchase property near Lambeau Field at prices well above fair market value so they will have room for future revenue-producing projects.

Jason Wied, vice president of administration and corporate counsel, said the team is close to acquiring five parcels of land from developer Jim Strohschein and will form a partnership with him to share ownership of property west of the stadium.

"We're doing it because of the short-term need for parking and the long-term need to have flexibility in keeping up with the rest of the league," Wied said.

The Packers lost 1,100 parking spaces when the stadium was renovated and security barriers were installed.

Strohschein purchased seven properties since late last year, all well above the listed fair market value.

Wied said the revenue-sharing requirements in the National Football League are "a fluid thing," and that the Packers want to keep their options open for future development.

"We don't want to be caught in a small footprint," Wied said, noting that the Packers would see the number of acres they own increase from 35 to 60 after the land deals are completed.

The Packers like the fact that the property south of Lambeau Field is residential but would be interested in discussing options if the village wants the area developed, Wied said.

The team also is content with keeping property north of Lombardi Avenue in the city of Green Bay residential, he said. (*Green Bay Press Gazette*)

Colleges and Universities

USC MAY MOVE TO ROSE BOWL

Los Angeles, Calif. – University of Southern California officials expressed displeasure with the state of negotiations to improve the Coliseum on and announced it would seek a lease agreement with the Rose Bowl as its home field beginning next season. The school's two-year lease with the Coliseum expires after Saturday's regular-season finale against crosstown rival UCLA.

USC would play at the Pasadena stadium for the next two seasons if an agreement is made.

USC officials said the temporary move is necessary because the Coliseum has not undergone "substantive physical upgrades or preventive maintenance" for more than 10 years "because the Coliseum focused on attracting an NFL team that would renovate the stadium."

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa called for a long-term deal to keep the Trojans in the Memorial Coliseum, saying for the first time he has given up hope of the National Football League returning to the aging stadium.

"While I remain committed to bringing a professional team to Los Angeles, it is time to read the scoreboard," Villaraigosa said in a statement Wednesday. "The Coliseum is no longer a viable option for the NFL."

According to USC, it offered to fund a minimum of \$100 million toward the repair, restoration and upgrade of the historic stadium, but the offer was rejected by the Coliseum.

"We never saw anything with a dollar figure," said Pat Lynch, Coliseum general manager.

University officials disagreed and released information about two proposals they had made.

Option A asked that the commission perform \$100 million in renovations – updating seats, restrooms and scoreboards, among other things – while promising that no other amateur or professional team would play in the Coliseum.

Option B called for USC to provide the \$100 million for improvements. In return, the school would take charge of the venue and seek to recoup at least some of its outlay by generating revenue from year-round events that might include international soccer games and concerts.

Lynch agreed that the Coliseum Commission put off improvements during NFL negotiations and said the Coliseum approved a two-year lease for USC starting next year.

However, the major renovations, which include USC subletting the Coliseum, require more negotiations, Lynch said.

"(The commission) saw USC's proposal and some things people just couldn't vote for," Lynch said. "That's just part of the negotiation. It takes time to flush these things out."

In a prepared statement, USC athletic director Mike Garrett said, "We'll keep working to stay in the Coliseum, but until we have full support ... we're forced to pursue the option of playing in the Rose Bowl."

UCLA's lease gives it exclusive rights to play at the Rose Bowl and USC would need its rival's permission to move.

"UCLA's long-term lease protects its position as the primary tenant," the university said in a prepared statement.

"In the context of its ongoing partnership with the Rose Bowl, UCLA is willing to review any proposal regarding an additional tenant, after which UCLA would enter into the necessary discussions with both the City of Pasadena and the Rose Bowl regarding the feasibility of such an arrangement." (*Los Angeles Times*)

RUTGERS STADIUM PLANS STALL

Piscataway, N.J. – A planned expansion of Rutgers Stadium is unlikely to be completed before the next college football season because Gov. Jon Corzine is having second thoughts about using state money for the project, according to the governor and university officials.

Corzine said he wants Rutgers, which was expecting a state loan of \$30 million, to find a way to fund the expansion without creating another financial burden for state taxpayers.

Rutgers Athletic Director Robert Mulcahy and football coach Greg Schiano have said the expansion – a \$120 million project that calls for adding 12,000 seats, luxury suites and a dining club to the stadium in Piscataway – is essential to catapulting Rutgers into the highest ranks of college football programs.

Just three weeks ago, it appeared the project would be started and finished by the start of the 2008 season. However, Corzine, stung by voter discontent over the state's finances, is concerned about the \$30 million state loan needed for the project. Rutgers has not determined from where the other \$90 million would come.

The Rutgers Board of Governors was expected to give final approval at its Dec. 6 meeting.

When asked whether the vote is still forthcoming, Mulcahy said, "I don't have that answer." The athletic director has spent part of this week in Trenton, meeting with legislators and officials from the Corzine administration about the project.

Since the expansion is expected to take eight months to complete, construction would need to start soon to be ready for the start of next season.

Adding 900 club seats in a mezzanine tier and a dining club on the east side of the stadium would likely be first, since those are considered the most lucrative parts of the expansion.

Rutgers has a waiting list of 9,400 for season tickets. (*Newark Star Ledger*)

WASHINGTON DELAYS HUSKY STADIUM PLAN

Seattle, Wash. – Washington athletic director Todd Turner had hoped to deliver a final recommendation on renovations to Husky Stadium to the school's Board of Regents this week, but Turner and a committee helping advise on the project have decided to push back making any presentation to the board until early next year.

Turner said the move is simply a delay due to the complicated nature of the project, in this case, trying to coordinate construction plans with those of Sound Transit, which is scheduled to break ground on a new station near the stadium in 2009. That construction could last until 2014.

"Nothing about our vision for the stadium has changed," Turner said. "We still have the same long-term list of objectives that we are trying to address." (*Seattle Times*)

OREGON CUTS SUITES FROM ARENA PLANS

Eugene, Ore. – University of Oregon officials have decided to eliminate luxury suites from their planned \$200 million arena. Project leaders want to recapture the tightly packed, vertical feeling at McArthur Court and believe they can make more money on club and loge seating than they could on suites, said Jim Bartko, an Oregon senior associate athletic director.

What Oregon is doing "is pretty unusual," said Dennis Howard, an Oregon business professor and a national expert on stadium and arena projects. "In fact, I look at several of the newest buildings that have been built on campuses, and typically they include anywhere from 17 to 41 suites."

Even Gonzaga, as intent as Oregon on retaining the rattletrap atmosphere of its beloved old arena, built six suites into the 6,000-seat McCarthey Athletic Center that opened in 2004.

The arena's final design will include premium seating and exclusive rooms beneath the seats for pre-game gatherings. The court will not be visible from those areas, a similar approach to the Founders' Club area at Washington's Hec Edmundson Pavilion, where \$25,000 donation requirements served as seed money for that arena's renovation. But suites have not been in Oregon's long-discussed arena design since 2004, Bartko said.

"The revenue will be greater, we feel, if the atmosphere's better," he said. "If you're trying to get a 12,000-seat, really loud, intimate building, suites affect that."

Whereas a suite might command a \$2,000 per seat annual donation, Oregon would reap more than that for each club or loge seat, Bartko said.

Potential seating and donation prices have not been set but are undergoing focus-group review now, Bartko said. Feedback from those groups is expected in mid-December. (*The Oregonian*)

MORE PLAYERS IN MICHIGAN STADIUM DISPUTE

Ann Arbor, Mich. – The U.S. Department of Justice has entered the legal dispute over handicapped accessibility at Michigan Stadium, asking to join a lawsuit by a paralyzed veterans' group that demands more wheelchair seating at the facility.

Meanwhile, the federal Department of Education has quickly rejected a compromise the University of Michigan filed to add more handicapped seats than it had originally planned for a renovation now under way. Citing a longstanding, unsuccessful debate with U-M, the DOE said it has asked the Department of Justice to "initiate judicial proceedings to enforce the rights of the United States" under provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The Justice Department also filed a motion asking for permission to inspect the 80-year-old stadium, where the three-year, \$226 million renovation is just getting started.

If the Justice Department is allowed to intervene in the case, an adverse ruling could put the university at risk of losing millions of dollars in federal aid.

Kelly Cunningham, a U-M spokeswoman, said the university is disappointed with the department of education's action because U-M had made its compromise proposal this week in good faith to achieve a timely resolution. She said the university has always met the needs of handicapped ticket-holders at Michigan football games, but the DOE disagreed after investigating complaints dating back several years.

"This follows a number of months in which the (DOE) Office for Civil Rights attempted to engage the University of Michigan to voluntarily resolve this matter," said Samara Yudof, press secretary at the Department of Education.

The department issued a letter of findings on Oct. 26 that outlined violations at the stadium. In its response, the university proposed adding 295 more wheelchair seats to the stadium bowl than it initially planned during the renovation. Those seats would be installed on portable platforms at entrance portals around the stadium.

Counting those additional wheelchair seats – plus the 88 to 90 that are currently in the end zones, the 72 that would be built on the top-most row of the western side of the bowl, and another 135 contained in the new luxury boxes and club seating areas – the renovated and expanded stadium would have 592 wheelchair seats.

The stadium currently seats more than 107,000 football fans. Citing the ADA standard, the veterans group wants 1 percent of the seats in the renovated stadium – about 1,080 – to be wheelchair accessible.

Yudof said the university's compromise was unacceptable for several reasons. She said only 28 additional wheelchair seats would be ready in 2008; the university did not commit to adding the rest of the wheelchair seating until 2010; the university did not commit to the provision of permanent wheelchair-designated seating; and the university did not fully address the non-seating issues that were cited in the Oct. 26 letter of findings.

Those non-seating problems were in areas that included bathrooms, concessions stands and access ramps. The university has maintained those areas either comply with the laws, or the problems are already fixed, or are being fixed. (*Ann Arbor News*)

ARENA IN LONG RANGE PLANS FOR WISCONSIN SCHOOL

Stevens Point, Wis. – The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's master plan outlines various changes to the campus in the next 18 years, including the proposed construction of a multi-purpose sports arena.

If the arena is built, UWSP would move its football operations from city-owned Goerke Field, which also hosts football games for Stevens Point Area Senior High and Pacelli High School. According to Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Dr. Bob Tomlinson, the arena would be available for the local teams to use as well.

Tomlinson said that there would be virtually no state funding to pay for this arena, and said that the majority of funds would be raised through private donations, fund-raising and friends of the

university. Student funds would be used only if approved by the Student Government Association. (*Wausau Daily Herald*)

The Rest of the News

NEW TRACK PLANNED FOR HOUSTON

Houston, Texas – Plans are under way to begin building a \$35 million raceway park north of Houston that would be the first in Texas designed for national Grand-Am and AMA Superbike races.

Liberty Motorsports Park will be located near Cleveland in Liberty County, said the park's president, Marcus McBain. The park could host its first national event in April 2009.

McBain signed a memorandum of understanding with the city of Cleveland for public tax and infrastructure assistance.

A racing enthusiast who has won two national races and seven regional championships, McBain said he has been working to get this project off the ground for about four years.

The city has agreed to spend \$1.2 million to run water and sewer to the site after it's annexed in January and after completion of a feasibility study.

A special tax zone will be created that would fund public improvements in the park zone.

In addition, the city approved two tax incentives. Track developers will get 2.5 percent of the 7 percent occupancy tax on the city's hotels and recoup any sales tax generated from the track site for promoting tourism in the city.

In return, track developers are predicting that at least two nationally televised races will be held at this master-planned facility that will attract more than 60,000 spectators.

Then there will also be revenue generated from regional races, trade shows, car and motorcycle schools, festivals and music concerts, McBain said. (*Houston Chronicle*)

SMITH TO KEEP LOWE'S TRACK OPEN

Concord, N.C. – Bruton Smith has agreed that Lowe's Motor Speedway will stay in Concord, where Smith's company will receive about \$80 million in incentives in return for spending at least \$100 million on renovations and upgrades.

Smith's decision to stay in Concord caps a seven-week saga involving one of Cabarrus County's biggest taxpayers, its biggest tourist draw and a signature sports venue in the Charlotte region.

Still undisclosed, however, are exactly which incentives Smith will receive, and what he'll spend on track improvements.

Smith declined to give details, but said there were many reasons he is staying in Concord. A big one, he said, was the number of appeals by residents, merchants and others – "many thousands" of people – to not close the speedway after 47 years in Cabarrus County.

Since early October, the speedway's future has been in jeopardy after Smith threatened to close it and build another track elsewhere in the Charlotte region.

The billionaire's threat was in response to an Oct. 1 vote by the Concord City Council blocking construction of a drag strip on speedway property. City leaders wanted more data on how noise would affect nearby residents, but Smith instead began considering other locations for the speedway.

As Smith said he was being courted by other communities offering land and tax breaks, Concord leaders began to backtrack. They reversed their drag strip vote and made appeals to keep the track open, including asking the state to name a road after Smith.

City, county and state officials also began working with Smith on incentives for him to renovate and upgrade the speedway. After several days of negotiations, Smith met again with local officials, then told track employees late in the day of "an agreement in principle" to stay in Concord.

Bob Carruth, chairman of the Cabarrus board of commissioners, said the total package was about \$80 million with about \$60 million split between Concord and Cabarrus County and \$20 million from the state.

Concord Mayor Scott Padgett said he expected the planned improvements at the speedway to be between \$100 million and \$200 million. (*Charlotte Observer*)

FOR THE RECORD

Buffalo, N.Y. Councilmember Brian Davis has put forth a plan to create a downtown stadium for the Bills. The plan was presented to the Buffalo Common Council this week. The council adopted Davis' resolution and will form a task force to investigate further. (*Buffalo News*) ... **Texas A&M officials** have been talking with the Dallas Cowboys about details of future A&M-Arkansas games expected to be played at the NFL team's new stadium in Arlington. The schools are close to finalizing a six- to eight-year agreement to play in Arlington beginning in 2009. (*Dallas Morning News*)