

## Task force wants council to set home base for soccer complex

By Scott Aust, Journal staff | Thursday, January 15, 2009

Rapid City's soccer task force says it's time for the Rapid City Council to decide the site for a proposed \$12 million complex. And the legal and finance committee voted 4-1 on Wednesday in favor of land given to the city along Elk Vale Road.

The area is also the No. 1 choice of the task force. No. 2 is the so-called "Wally Byam site" on city land along S.D. Highway 44 in east Rapid City.

The task force wants a firm commitment from the council on the soccer complex location because that decision is holding up fundraising. Private contributions, plus \$3.8 million in city 2012 Fund monies, figure into the project's scope and infrastructure needs.

Proposed in 2005, the 25-field complex will be big, but proponents say it will offer potential large economic benefits by being a contender for state, national and international soccer competitions.

"The council has to make some decision as it relates to land," task force chairman Alderman Malcom Chapman said Wednesday. "There's going to be cost involved in providing infrastructure to any site, and that's the discussion the council has to have about yes, this is the site, or no, this is not the site, but we cannot continue to hang the soccer folks out without making some decisions."

Businessman Doyle Estes gave the city 80 acres north of Interstate 90 along Elk Vale Road in June 2007. The city received the deed last June, and technically, the city owns the land; however, the council has yet to officially accept the property.

Complaints from soccer supporters about lack of city action prompted Mayor Alan Hanks in October to appoint the soccer task force. The group includes council members, city staffers and representatives of local soccer organizations.

Alderman Sam Kooiker on Wednesday voted against recommending a site, saying each possible area still needs a cost-benefit analysis. He preferred waiting two weeks so rough cost estimates could be made.

Chapman said rough numbers could be prepared by Monday for the council meeting, when the task force wants a site decision.

"What we're asking is to move the discussion along, attach the numbers to it and have the city council figure out how to fund this if the city council feels this is their responsibility to make the land ready and usable for soccer. Those discussions are the responsibility of the council and belong here," Chapman said.

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