

NEWS

Madison Mallards stadium renovation forum draws engaged crowd*Katya Szabados on Wednesday 01/16/2008 8:11 am*

Dozens of people, many of them longtime north side residents, attended a public listening session regarding stadium renovation plans for the Madison Mallards at the Warner Park Community Center on Tuesday evening. The team sought to update community members on the status of the project, present changes to the plan and hear and respond to attendees' questions and concerns.

The biggest change to the stadium would be the rotation of its playing field by 180 degrees. This would make the park compliant with national baseball standards, reduce noise from the stadium in adjacent neighborhoods, and shield both players' and fans' eyes from the setting sun.

The renovation plans (available at right in the related downloads) also include the construction of three additional buildings to house concessions, restrooms and souvenir stands; a press box; a new sound system; rooftop seating; and various proposals to improve parking for games. An earlier proposal to lower the playing field to improve game visibility has been abandoned due to environmental and financial concerns associated with bringing it below the water table.

A more divisive element of the plans would sell naming rights for the stadium. Mallards general manager Vern Stenman stated that he's personally "not a big fan of naming rights," but thinks that it would make financial sense to help pay for the renovation. Several attendees expressed concern over the proposal, though most understood the reasoning behind it.

Many of those who spoke at the meeting expressed support for naming rights as long as the sponsor contributed to the family-friendly atmosphere of the stadium. Stenman assured the crowd that the Mallards would ensure the sponsor was a local, community-service oriented organization, and also noted that it would have to be approved by the Madison Common Council.

Other issues raised at the listening session included concerns over traffic and pedestrian safety surrounding the stadium, light and noise pollution, and the scheduling of non-Mallards events.

One question as to whether a renovation would increase ticket prices at the ballpark drew assurances from Stenman that \$5 tickets would continue to be available. He did state that there may be more higher-end tickets available for those who want to pay for better seating.

For the most part, attendees expressed support for the project, for the ballpark's location in the north side, and for the Mallards organization in general.

North side resident Dale Matthews had nothing but praise for the Mallards organization. "I would love to see the Mallards continue on. They are one of the few endeavors at Warner Park that have been successful and one of the very few that has made it a family event," he says. "I think the economic impact for the area of the north side is going to be very hard to measure but I am sure it is considerable."

Mallards "beer man" John Shivers spoke to the contributions the organization makes to the north side community. He prefaced his comments by disclosing that he is employed by the team, but also that he is a long-time Madison resident and an all-around sports fan who was actually married in the ballpark.

"I know it means neighborhood jobs because I have got one," Shivers says. "Instead of finding ways to say no, let's find

Related Downloads:

>> [Mallards stadium renovation concept and budget report 010208.pdf](#)

Article Tools:**Share this Article:**

MOST P

1. [Johnn Bale r with F](#)
2. [Woof: Club I](#)
3. [UW H](#)
4. [Café I](#)
5. [Spice Salsa](#)
6. [My top of 20C](#)
7. [Carni](#)
8. [Wedd](#)
9. [Sunde magni](#)
10. [An on 90 mu Madis](#)

a way to say yes."

Renovation plans were initiated in 2004 when the Mallards organization approached the city to discuss the possibilities for major updates to the ballpark. Since then, the city Parks Department has budgeted \$800,000 for bleacher improvements to be completed by the end of 2008. The renovation was originally budgeted at \$4 million and has since been increased to \$5.6 million, a number that was unveiled at Tuesday's meeting.

Architect Jonathan Parker, representing Eppstein Uhen Architects, which was hired by the city in 2007, explained that the increase in the overall renovation budget is mainly due to the annual increase in construction costs.

The proposed renovations have already been discussed at multiple neighborhood association meetings and other public forums like this one on Tuesday. The next public listening session will be held on Tues., Jan. 29, but the team along with north side Madison alders Satya Rhodes-Conway (District 12) and Michael Schumacher (District 18) invite public input at any time.