

A's News Clips, Thursday, December 2, 2010

A's fans turn Planning Commission into rally to keep team

Hearing on ballpark draws many who want team to stay in Oakland

By Angela Woodall, Oakland Tribune 12/2/2010

Money, traffic, architecture, terrorism, jobs and civic pride all became the topics of Wednesday night's Oakland Planning Commission meeting. But few mentioned what the environmental impacts of a 39,000-seat ballpark on the waterfront would be -- even though that was the purpose of the hearing.

"This is not an opportunity to rail against the ownership that has expressed a desire to leave Oakland," Commissioner Doug Boxer told the crowd, which began to gather in the plaza outside City Hall hours before the meeting began.

They donned T-shirts and handed out stickers printed with the slogan "Stay," while business owners, neighbors, media members and elected officials began filing into the 60-seat hearing room.

Few environmental impact reports generate the level of attention that the Victory Court proposal has. But so many people packed inside the room that staff had to ask some to move to another room where they could continue to follow the meeting. Dozens more filled the lobby of City Hall.

Boxer also asked people to hold their applause at public comments. That didn't stop the clapping after one man told the commission that it was time to look at what Oakland can do instead of stopping at opposition.

"The A's belong in Oakland. It's our history," the man said.

Bryan Grunwald, a retired architect introduced one of the few sober moments with his competing proposal to build a ballpark above Interstate 980 between 14th and 18th streets. City officials already declined the proposal while Jerry Brown was mayor of Oakland. But Grunwald has garnered support from several neighborhood groups and a business association.

But gridlock on Interstate Highway-880 and city streets was a concern. BART is within blocks of the proposed Victory Court site, but by one estimate up to 500 fans per minute would file into the ballpark on game days. In addition, 16 businesses would have to be relocated, potentially involving eminent domain and displaced jobs.

Several people criticized the city for not communicating more about why they chose Victory Court over other potential sites. They asked for more transparency about the process and spending, including where the funds will come from to fund the ballpark -- assuming Victory Court clears environmental and other hurdles.

Chin Music: Pondering Lance Berkman vs. Adam Dunn for the A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 12/1/2010 10:20PM

We'll get some clarity on the A's roster situation by Thursday night, as the team faces a 9 p.m. deadline to tender contracts to its 10 players eligible for arbitration. Those who aren't offered contracts become free agents. As those decisions loom, here's some thoughts on another A's topic ...

Adam Dunn's name surfaced Wednesday as a free agent that Oakland could have interest in, but Lance Berkman remains their focus as they pursue a DH-type power hitter. I have no doubt that Dunn ranks somewhere on the A's wish list of hitters. How could he not? He's the top power hitter on the market, he's just 31 years old and he's averaged 40 homers over the past seven seasons. But he's also likely to require a four- or five-year contract in the neighborhood of \$70 million. That would likely leave the A's with little salary room to make other additions. Berkman's going rate is thought to be around \$7 million on a one-year deal, and perhaps he'd come cheaper on a two-year deal. Signing him would give the A's flexibility to shop for a proven fifth starter (if they aren't able to sign Hisashi Iwakuma). Or perhaps they could add a reliever to bolster the bullpen. Or they could look for another hitter to accompany Berkman.

Of course, the flip side to this logic is the theory that the A's are merely one big hitter away from being a contender. And if that's the case, why not just dump a truckload of money on Dunn and pencil him in at DH? The big question, I suppose, is whether one dominant hitter truly is enough to reverse the A's offensive fortunes, or whether it will take multiple new additions. That's something to ponder ...

The Colorado Rockies also are pursuing Berkman, according to the Denver Post. So if the A's failed to sign Berkman, who turns 35 in February, it stands to reason their interest in Dunn could escalate. But they would also face competition for him, which could drive his price up more. The White Sox and Cubs reportedly like Dunn.

At any rate, the A's immediate decisions involve their 10 players up for arbitration. DH/outfielder Jack Cust and outfielder Travis Buck are both strong candidates to be non-tendered. But the most compelling decision comes at third base, where it's unlikely that Kevin Kouzmanoff and Edwin Encarnacion both will be kept. Encarnacion hit for more power last year but would probably be more costly, as he made more money in 2010. Kouzmanoff has the better glove but was a bit disappointing offensively last season.

—Lastly, Sports Illustrated came up with a fun top 10 list involving the greatest sports dynasties that never happened. They considered teams who won a single world championship but seemed destined to win more. The Bash Brother-era A's checked in at No. 10, while the 1970's Raiders ranked No. 8. [Check it out](#)

A's interested in Adam Dunn

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Lance Berkman remains the A's top target after club officials visited the free agent in Houston this week, but the team also has expressed interest in Adam Dunn - a development that might take on increased significance if Berkman signs with Colorado.

An industry source called Oakland "absolutely a serious contender" for Dunn, 31, who has averaged more than 40 homers per year over the past seven seasons. Dunn could command more than \$70 million in a deal, however, and Berkman, 34, is not thought to want more than one or two years at \$7 million or so per season. The Denver Post reported Wednesday evening that Berkman was close to a deal with the Rockies.

There were discussions about a possible meeting between the A's and Dunn in Houston when team representatives were in town to see Berkman, but it did not happen.

Oakland's pursuit of Dunn and Berkman, and the team's probable interest in any and every other power hitter on the market, makes it increasingly likely that the A's will not tender a contract to designated hitter Jack Cust by today's deadline for the second year in a row.

Cust, the A's top home-run hitter from 2007-2009, is eligible for arbitration again, and it is clear that the team is looking for other power sources. The DH spot will be the simplest to plug with several potential options, from a free-agent acquisition to a member of the current roster, such as Edwin Encarnacion or Chris Carter.

Encarnacion, picked up on waivers from Toronto after the season, also is a candidate to not be tendered a contract along with Kevin Kouzmanoff; both are arbitration-eligible, and it is possible that Oakland will not want to keep two third basemen on the roster, especially taking into account unconfirmed reports linking the team with free agent Adrian Beltre.

Outfielder Travis Buck, once considered a rising star until injuries derailed his career, is a prime nontender candidate today because he qualified for super-two status this offseason, making him eligible for arbitration. Reliever Brad Ziegler is also a super-two arbitration-eligible player, making his status somewhat iffy, but the A's have valued the sidearmer's work over the years.

Outfielder Conor Jackson has been mentioned as a non-tender candidate by some outlets, but the A's have been clear that the former Cal player is in the team's plans.

Oakland continues to talk with Japanese pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma after talks briefly broke down a week and a half ago. The A's have until Tuesday to sign Iwakuma.

Drumbeat: Updated Dunn information - no meeting took place

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 12/1/2010 9:33AM

<p>UPDATE: The A's and Adam Dunn did not meet yesterday, I am now told - my original source, usually reliable, led me to believe that such a meeting took place in Houston, but, it seems, there were only discussions about meeting there and they did not happen. The A's met only with Lance Berkman, and I believe he remains their top target. Though the club has expressed interest in Dunn, and they are "absolutely" considered contenders for his services, my source says, there never were meetings between the sides.

I'm leaving up the original post, though the meeting information is inaccurate; I don't want to just erase it as if it never appeared, especially after tweeting it all morning. Just dumping the blog doesn't change the fact that I had bad info; I want to make sure anyone who sees this knows that it was inaccurate, with my heartiest apologies. You trust sources not to steer you wrong, and that didn't really happen in this case, but that's my fault, ultimately.

ORIGINAL POST: The Chronicle learned this morning that the A's met with Adam Dunn in Houston yesterday, and according to an industry source, Oakland is considered a serious candidate to land a deal with the 31-year-old slugger.

Dunn, the top available power hitter this offseason, could command more than \$70 million with his next contract, and he has indicated that he would prefer to play in the field rather than to DH, so the A's might have to consider putting him at first base or at a corner outfield spot in order to convince him to come to Oakland.

Dunn hit 38 homers each of the past two seasons with Washington and 40 or more each of the previous five seasons with Cincinnati.

The A's met with Lance Berkman in Houston yesterday as well; Berkman, 34, potentially would be a much cheaper option because he might be signed to a one- or two-year deal rather than the four- or five-years that it would take to get anything done with Dunn.

There is no doubt that Dunn would be an immediate answer to the A's power problems, but he will cost far more than he did two winters ago, when he didn't sign until February and got \$20 million for two seasons.

Eight years ago, A's general manager Billy Beane told Chronicle national baseball writer John Shea this about Dunn, when asked the fact that the U.S. wasn't producing as many top baseball players anymore:

"A few years ago, he probably would have stayed in Texas and played football," Beane said. "Now he's 6-foot-6, looks like Paul Bunyan and can run. He's 21 years old, three inches taller than (Mark) McGwire and as fast as (Jose) Canseco. That's a unique talent."

A's officials have not returned calls seeking comment today, and I don't believe they will, considering the team's policy of not discussing free agents.

Oakland gains A's stadium edge as San Jose waits

Carolyn Jones, Chronicle Staff Writer 12/2/2010

For a team with the second-lowest home attendance in baseball, the Oakland Athletics sure have a lot of stadium offers.

San Jose and Oakland are both plowing forward with plans to build a state-of-the-art ballpark for the A's with little public financing and loads of amenities. On Tuesday, Oakland's plan was poised for a significant step forward, while San Jose's suffered a setback.

In Oakland, about 200 green-and-gold clad A's fans packed a planning commission meeting to support the city's plans for a waterfront stadium near Jack London Square. The public input wraps up preliminary steps before the city launches an environmental impact report.

Meanwhile, in San Jose, the city missed its Tuesday deadline to place the A's stadium on the March ballot. Voters need to approve the use of city land for the ballpark, which is slated for the downtown area near the Sharks' hockey arena.

In the end, it will be Major League Baseball officials who decide which stadium is built. A special commission has been considering for almost two years whether to grant A's owner Lew Wolff's request to move the team to San Jose, where the San Francisco Giants currently hold the league's territorial rights.

Fervid A's fans made their case Tuesday for keeping the team in its home of 43 years.

"We're here to look the city in the face and say, 'We want to get this done as badly as you do,' " said lifelong A's fan Maurice Greer, 29, of El Cerrito. "The A's are to Oakland like how Lake Merritt is to Oakland. It's beautiful, it's pride."

Oakland's proposed ballpark would be on the Embarcadero at Oak Street. The 20-acre site would include a 39,000-seat stadium, parking lot and possibly retail, housing and office space. The site is near the Lake Merritt BART station and Interstate 880.

As with San Jose's plan, the city would provide the land and infrastructure and the team would pay for the stadium.

If it's built, the ballpark would open in 2015.

The city's hearing Tuesday was a "milestone" for keeping the A's in Oakland, said Planning Commissioner Doug Boxer .

"It demonstrates the city's willingness to move forward with a baseball-only home for the A's," he said. "It shows Oakland is stepping up."

A baseball-only stadium is what Wolff desperately wants for his team. The A's share the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum with the Raiders, and complain of torn-up grass and an awkward configuration that discourages players and fans alike.

San Jose's plan for the A's calls for a 32,000-seat ballpark on a 14-acre site near a Cal Train station downtown. Retail, housing and office space would also accompany the stadium, which, like Oakland's, is a redevelopment project.

San Jose is postponing the stadium ballot measure until Major League Baseball decides on the Athletics' new home, said Michele McGurk, spokeswoman for Mayor Chuck Reed.

"We're waiting and eager to hear from Major League Baseball," she said. "We think we have one of the best sports markets in the country, and we're ready to play ball."

A's linked to free-agent slugger Dunn

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's apparently had more on their Tuesday agenda in Houston than a dinner with Lance Berkman.

According to the San Francisco Chronicle, Oakland officials also met with another free-agent slugger, Adam Dunn, while on the trip. The team is said to be a "serious candidate" to land a deal with him.

Dunn, 31, is considered to be one of the premier power hitters available this winter and is expected to garner bids from several teams. The veteran slugger, who has hit at least 38 homers in each of the past seven seasons, is reportedly looking for a four- or five-year deal worth \$70-plus million.

That's a hefty price tag for a budget-conscious A's team, but the club does have room to spend this offseason and is in desperate need of increasing long-ball totals. In 2010, Oakland had only four players with 10 home runs or more, with Kevin Kouzmanoff's 16 leading the way.

Dunn has consistently expressed an interest to remain on the field, either at first base or in the outfield. The A's, then, may have to look past their DH wants and consider granting Dunn a glove in order to reel him into the Bay Area, despite their constant praise of youngster Daric Barton and his defensive presence. If successful in their pursuit of Dunn, Oakland could suddenly be dangling Barton as trade bait.

Berkman, meanwhile, would represent a cheaper solution to upgrading the offense, as he's said to be looking for a one- or two-year deal. However, Berkman's power numbers have dropped considerably in recent years, and he wouldn't offer the A's the same type of threat as Dunn presumably would.

A's officials have not commented on either player and are likely not to do so, given their policy of not discussing free agents.

Dozens of A's fans call on team to stay in Oakland

Associated Press 12/2/2010

Some Oakland Athletics' fans are clamoring to keep the team from moving to another city.

About 200 people clad in the team's green and gold colors attended an Oakland Planning Commission meeting on Wednesday night to express their support for a new waterfront stadium for the A's near Jack London Square.

The meeting was intended to solicit public input before an environmental impact study of the proposed 39,000-seat stadium gets under way.

The fans told the commissioners the A's are a part of Oakland's history, and city officials should do what they can to keep the team from leaving.

A's owner Lew Wolff would like to move the team to San Jose. But that would require permission from Major League Baseball because the San Francisco Giants currently hold territorial rights to the San Jose area.

Baseball: Iwakuma, A's back at negotiating table

Mainichi Daily News 12/2/2010

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Hisashi Iwakuma and the Oakland Athletics are negotiating again, The San Francisco Chronicle reported in its Tuesday edition.

According to the Chronicle, two sources say Iwakuma, who has been posted by the Rakuten Eagles, and the Athletics have resumed talks and that it is not "out of the realm of possibility that Oakland will get the Japanese pitcher signed by the Dec. 7 deadline."

The Athletics, who would not budge from their initial offer of \$15.25 million over four years, could be willing to fork out \$9.5 million a season for Iwakuma counting the posting fee, the Chronicle said.

Oakland put up \$19.1 million to win the 30-day exclusive negotiating rights for the 29-year-old Iwakuma, the Pacific League MVP and the Sawamura Award winner in 2008.

Iwakuma's agent Don Nomura had said the Athletics told him that they do not have the budget to improve their offer.

The figure cited by the Chronicle would stand to give Iwakuma an annual raise of approximately \$1 million from his current salary with Rakuten, which will lose out on the \$19.1 million should the right-hander and Oakland fail to strike a deal.

The Minnesota Twins have won the rights to negotiate with Lotte Marines shortstop Tsuyoshi Nishioka.

Baseball's free-agent shopping about to heat up

By KEN FIDLIN, TORONTO SUN 12/2/2010

With baseball's off-season meat market barely underway, things stand to heat up at the end of this week and really catch fire next week at the annual winter meetings in Orlando.

There are plenty of big-time free agents, starting with pitcher Cliff Lee, outfielders Carl Crawford and Jayson Werth, third baseman Adrian Beltre, first basemen Adam Dunn and Paul Konerko and closer Rafael Soriano.

Question is, which teams have the cash to move the market?

We have assembled a totally subjective pecking order.

The Big Shooters

1. New York Yankees — Well, duh. The Yanks had a \$213-million US payroll last season. Right now, they have \$144 million committed to 10 players for 2011. None of those players is named Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, or Andy Pettitte. Add another \$40-\$50 million for that trio and we haven't even begun to talk about Lee, Crawford, etc.

2. Boston Red Sox — The Red Sox had a team record \$168-million payroll in 2010. Right now, they have \$112 million committed to 14 players. Even after they overpay Jonathan Papelbon, there is cash left over to be in the hunt for Crawford, or maybe Werth, with a side order of Beltre.

3. Anaheim Angels — Coming off a \$121-million payroll in 2010, Arte Moreno has made it clear he's going to spend for '11. Right now, the Angels have \$94 million committed to nine players with nine arbitration-eligibles still to be dealt with. The Angels have targeted Crawford and Soriano.

4. Texas Rangers — Fresh out of bankruptcy and flush with a boatload of TV money (20 years, \$3 billion from Fox Sports), the Rangers are dangerous. For 2011, they have seven players under contract for a modest \$37 million and six arbitration eligibles to deal with. If they want Lee back, they have the resources, and then some.

5. Detroit Tigers — The Tigers have already been busy (Victor Martinez, four years, \$50 million; Joaquin Benoit three years, \$16.5 million) but they still have some room to play. They spent \$133 million on player salaries last year and are currently at \$83 million committed to 10 players.

Eager To Play

1. Chicago White Sox — The South-siders had a payroll of \$103 million in 2010 and they have 13 players under contract for \$82 million right now. They'll be shopping with care.

2. Oakland Athletics — The A's spent only \$58 million on salaries last year but GM Billy Beane has been making some noise by kicking the tires on Dunn and Lance Berkman.

3. Baltimore Orioles — With only \$28 million committed, the Orioles will try to spend some money next week but it's tough to attract free agents when you are destined to lose.

4. Tampa Bay Rays — Free agency has created some holes. The Rays' payroll was \$73 million last year, and right now, they have only \$16 million committed to five players, but also have nine arbitration-eligibles.

Tapped Out

1. Philadelphia Phillies — The Phils spent \$138 million on players last year and are already committed to spend \$146 million on 17 contracted players in 2011.

2. Los Angeles Dodgers — The Dodgers' payroll was at \$102 million a year ago and they have obligations to 11 players for \$87 million. And that's before the divorce lawyers get their slice.

3. St. Louis Cardinals — Cards spent \$94 million last year and already have \$90 million committed to 11 players. They'll be saving to pay Albert Pujols' ransom next year.

4. New York Mets — Coming off a \$126-million payroll, the Mets are almost at that number right now for 2011. They have \$119 million locked in for 10 players already.

Bargain Hunters

Everybody else, including the Blue Jays, who had a payroll of \$79 million last year and currently have \$43 million in obligations to seven players, with nine arbitration-eligibles to deal with, including Jose Bautista and Shaun Marcum.

Toronto general manager Alex Anthopoulos has said on numerous occasions this off-season that Toronto's best chance to continue to upgrade its talent is through the draft and through trades.

Thursday is the deadline for all teams to tender contracts to players under their control. Any non-tendered player becomes a free agent.

Athletics to Meet With Lance Berkman

FanHouse 11/30/2010

The Oakland A's will meet with free agent [Lance Berkman](#) on Tuesday, according to the Associated Press, as they search for ways to improve an offense that ranked 11th in the American League in runs scored last season.

Berkman hit .248 with 14 homers and 58 RBI between Houston and New York in 2010, a significant drop-off from his star-caliber production during the middle of the decade, but Oakland is desperate for the thump even a diminished Berkman could provide. It ranked 13th in homers and 12th in slugging in the league last year.

One potential stumbling block could be Berkman's desire to play in the field. He describes himself as a first baseman and outfielder, not as a designated hitter, even though he hit .286 in 25 games there last season with the [Yankees](#).

The A's, who have often placed a premium on defense in recent seasons, would be unlikely to play him anywhere extensively besides at DH.

A's stadium likely won't make next San Jose ballot

Associated Press 12/1/2010

San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed says a stadium proposal for the Oakland Athletics in the city is not likely to make it onto the March 8 ballot.

Reed tells the San Jose Mercury News that's because Major League Baseball has yet to decide whether the A's can move. The A's need the MLB's approval for relocation because the [San Francisco Giants](#) hold territorial rights to the San Jose area.

The city also has yet to reach an agreement with A's owner Lew Wolff on a stadium, which would be needed to craft ballot language.

A spokesman for the MLB declined to comment on when Commissioner Bud Selig will receive a report from a committee looking into the possible move.

San Jose officials say they're now looking to April, May or June for a possible ballot measure.