

San Jose City Council endorses option deal for land sale to Oakland A's

By Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury News

In a public gesture it hopes will reverberate with Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig, the San Jose City Council on Tuesday agreed to give the Oakland A's exclusive rights to buy almost 5 acres of downtown land for \$6.9 million -- but only if the team agrees to build a ballpark on the site.

The 10 to 1 vote, with only City Councilman Pierluigi Oliverio opposed, granted the A's a two-year option for \$50,000 that could be extended for a third year for \$25,000.

City Councilman Sam Liccardo amended the motion to ensure that if the A's ultimately exercise their option, the sale of the land for a ballpark must go to a public vote.

But the A's are not expected to buy the land until they receive word from Selig about their request to relocate the team near San Jose's Diridon Station.

"Opportunities to get a Major League Baseball team don't come to a city very often," Mayor Chuck Reed told the council. "But this is not necessarily just about baseball. I pose the question: What's in it for San Jose?"

Reed then ticked off a list of benefits the estimated \$500 million ballpark, privately financed by the A's, would bring to the city: about \$1.5 million in annual revenue to the city's general fund; \$1.7 million to San Jose's struggling redevelopment agency and affordable housing; and a few million to Santa Clara County, the water district and schools. Reed also touted the almost 1,000 permanent jobs that would be created by a ballpark.

"Whether or not you like baseball," he said, "this is a way to help our general fund."

Reed acknowledged the city has more hurdles ahead, not the least of which is Selig's decision, which, if San Jose gets the nod, would then have to be approved by three-quarters of the league's owners.

The ruling has been anticipated since March 2009 when Selig appointed a committee to study the team's options that could ultimately force the San Francisco Giants to relinquish their territorial rights to the South Bay.

Not everyone was happy about Tuesday's option deal.

Marc Morris, a spokesman for Better Sense San Jose, a local group opposed to the ballpark, called the option agreement "a self-imposed distress sale" that doesn't consider what he believes would be a more fiscally prudent long-term use for the land.

A 2010 study by Collier's International concluded that the land, purchased over the years by San Jose's redevelopment agency for \$25.1 million, was worth \$13.9 million if it were used for retail and office space, and \$6.9 million if used for a ballpark. (Two other parcels -- about 5.5 acres owned by AT&T and a Los Gatos family -- are needed to complete the proposed 13.4-acre site. The final 3 acres are streets.)

Morris also questioned the number of permanent jobs that have been estimated in an economic analysis commissioned by the city.

"Accepting this strategy would be a terrible mistake," Morris told the council. "We can and should do better."

An attorney representing Stand For San Jose, a coalition backed by the San Jose Giants, also addressed the council with questions about the validity of environmental studies related to the ballpark.

Oliverio said after the meeting that he voted against the option deal because he thinks the decision should be made by San Jose voters, not the council.

San Jose OKs land deal for potential A's stadium

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's took another incremental step in their quest for a stadium in San Jose on Tuesday when the San Jose City Council voted 10-1 to approve extending a land-purchase option to the team.

"It's a small step, but it's still a significant step," San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed said by phone. "It feels more concrete. Now we're talking about a real-estate deal. I think we're getting closer."

San Jose is granting the A's a two-year option to buy about 5 acres of land downtown, near HP Pavilion and the Diridon Station. The option will cost the A's \$50,000, and there is a \$25,000 option for a third year. During that period, the team may purchase the land for \$6.98 million - an outcome presumably dependent on Major League Baseball approving the move.

A's owner Lew Wolff said in an e-mail to The Chronicle that he is "pleased with the vote" by the City Council.

There are no indications from MLB that the A's stadium issue is on the agenda for next week's owners' meetings in Milwaukee; the next owners' meetings after that will be in January. MLB's blue-ribbon panel studying a new A's ballpark has operated for nearly three years with no public recommendation.

Even if the A's get the OK to move, any final land sale and ballpark must be approved by San Jose voters, a stipulation affirmed by City Council vote Tuesday. No public funds are to be used to build or maintain the facility or to reimburse the team for any building-related expenses.

Santa Clara County is considered to be Giants' territory by MLB, but major-league owners could vote to overturn the territorial rights.

The A's are likely to pay the \$50,000 for the option agreement within the next few days. Should the team decide not to purchase the land, the city will keep the \$50,000.

Drumbeat: San Jose City Council votes to extend land option to A's

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle 11/8/2011 5:16pm

If Major League Baseball is paying attention, the A's took another incremental step in their quest for a new stadium in San Jose today when the San Jose City Council voted 10-1 to approve extending a land purchase option to the team.

"It's a small step, but it's still a significant step," San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed told me by phone. "It feels more concrete. Now we're talking about a real estate deal. I think we're getting closer."

San Jose is granting the A's a two-year option to buy about five acres of land downtown, near HP Pavilion and the Diridon Station. The option will cost the A's \$50,000, and there is a \$25,000 option for a third year. At any point during that time - presumably only if and when MLB gives approval for such a move - the team may then purchase the land for \$6.98 million.

There has been a sense in the past month or two that the A's stadium issue is picking up steam, in part because the team has discussed little else when it comes to any offseason decision making, but general manager Billy Beane has said that he believes MLB will reach a conclusion soon. On Tuesday during the City Council meeting, Reed said that the hope is that a decision will come between now and January.

There are no indications from MLB that the A's stadium issue is on the agenda for next week's owners' meetings in Milwaukee, and it's generally thought that the January owners' meetings might address the issue. MLB's blue-ribbon panel studying a new A's ballpark was formed nearly three years ago, with no recommendation so far.

Several times during the Dodgers' ownership troubles there have been suggestions from the national media that A's owner Lew Wolff might angle for the Dodgers, perhaps overly frustrated by the inability to get the OK for a stadium in San Jose. Those stories generally note that Wolff is a developer based in Los Angeles. They rarely, if ever, note that Wolff also has been a significant force in San Jose development, and that he is a minority owner. The majority owner, John Fisher of the Gap, is based in San Francisco.

One national writer speculated this past week that in return for not pursuing the Dodgers, Wolff would get the go-ahead for San Jose. If the A's somehow have spun such a scenario in their favor, that certainly would be enterprising, but considering that all owners have to be approved by the current owners, if MLB didn't want a particular prospective owner, they could just go ahead and shoot him down, anyway. And again, Fisher is the big-money partner here, not Wolff.

Nevertheless, momentum seems to be building, somehow. And if the A's offseason spending is tied to getting a decision, a little giddy-up would be a good thing for their payroll planning.

But even if the A's got the OK to move, it still must go to a vote of the people: Any final land sale and ballpark must be approved by San Jose voters, with June considered a potential election target should the A's obtain permission from MLB to move to San Jose. No public funds are to be used to build or maintain the facility, however, or to reimburse the team for any building-related expenses.

Santa Clara County is considered to be Giants' territory by MLB, but the major-league owners could vote to overturn the territorial rights. The territorial rights were not specified at all until the early '90s, when the Giants had their own stadium measure on the ballot in San Jose, a measure that failed. No other two-team market has designated territorial rights.

Outfielder Miller named to Topps All-Star team

Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento River Cats outfielder Jai Miller, who became only the third player in franchise history to hit 30 or more home runs in a season, is among the nine players selected to the Topps Triple-A All-Star Team. The best performances in all Minor League Baseball classifications are again being honored by the Topps Company of New York, N.Y., in conjunction with Minor League Baseball.

Miller (26) of Selma, Ala., led Triple-A outfielders in slugging percentage (.588). The center fielder's 32 homers were second best in Triple-A and his .956 on-base-plus-slugging percentage ranked third among Triple-A outfielders.

Miller's 12 homers in July matched a River Cats record for homers in a month. He earned Pacific Coast League Player of the Week honors for the week of April 18-24.

Here are the other members of the Topps Triple-A All-Star Team:

Bryan LaHair (29) of Surprise, Ariz., captured the Joe Bauman Award for leading MiLB with 38 regular season homers. The Iowa Cubs first baseman and PCL Most Valuable Player also topped MiLB with a .664 slugging percentage and a 1.070 OPS.

Johnny Giavotella (24) of Harahan, La., led Triple-A second baseman with a .338 average, 34 doubles, .390 on-base percentage and a .481 slugging percentage. His 158 hits with the Omaha Storm Chasers tied for the classification lead among those at his position.

Gil Velazquez (32) of Las Vegas, Nev., paced classification shortstops with a .328 average and 78 runs. He had eight homers, 25 doubles, and 17 stolen bases with the Salt Lake Bees. After going hitless in his first game, Velazquez put together an 18-game hit streak. He also had hit streaks stretching nine and 11 games.

Russ Canzler (25) of Hazleton, Pa., led International League hitters with 40 doubles, 62 extra-base hits and a .530 slugging percentage. The Durham Bulls third baseman also ranked in the top five in his league in average (.314), walks (67), hits (154), on-base percentage (.401), runs (78) and RBIs (83) in winning IL MVP honors.

Devin Mesoraco (23) of Lakeland, Fla., led Triple-A catchers with a .289 average, 36 doubles and 71 runs batted in. His slugging percentage (.484) and OPS (.855) with the Louisville Bats were best among IL backstops.

Collin Cowgill (25) of Lexington, Ky., ranked second in the classification with a .354 average and third with a .430 on-base percentage. The Reno Aces outfielder was also among the PCL leaders in slugging (.554) and OPS (.984).

Alejandro De Aza (27) La Romana, D.R., led the IL with a .322 average. The Charlotte Knights outfielder finished among the circuit's best in OPS (.871), on-base percentage (.378), stolen bases (22), slugging (.494) and triples (5).

Julio Teheran (20) of Cartagena, Columbia, led Triple-A with 15 wins. The Gwinnett Braves right-hander tied for second in the classification with his 2.55 ERA and .232 average against in earning IL Most Valuable Pitcher and Rookie of the Year honors.