

## **Future of Vadnais Dome Meeting**

Location: The Colonial office complex

Date: 11.14.18

The following notes were taken by an NSSA board member in attendance. They reflect what was said with a degree of interpretation, inference and reading between the lines.

- Blake Huffman (Dist 1 Ramsey county commissioner) was the primary speaker and gave the updates from the County perspective. No other commissioners attended.
- Meeting was attended by maybe 50 people (mostly from White Bear Soccer) but a variety of other folks too.
- The county had a workshop in October to discuss options for the dome.
- Blake indicated the commissioners are split on the fate of the dome – the two closest to the property (Blake and Victoria) are in favor of some type of indoor turf. He said at least a couple are firmly against and the others are somewhere in the middle.
- He gave some history and was honest in his assessment that the county was primarily interested in the hockey rinks when it acquired the facility. In his words, the dome was the red-headed step child and the county didn't have any experience in operating a dome.
- The options for the property that came out of the workshop are:
  - Rebuild the dome as it was
  - Build a permanent structure / field house in its place
  - Eliminate it and put in more parking
  - Eliminate it and put in 2 hockey rinks.
- As they do their due diligence on these four options, they will be talking with area school districts and city governments – pushing for a dome to be built elsewhere if they go routes C or D above. He mentioned the White Bear School District as the primary partner they'd like to work with. According to others in attendance, the WB school district board is currently putting together a master plan for their school facilities, including athletics. That plan is going to be finalized by the end of January.
- Action item: NSSA should see if we can get Mounds View and Roseville at the table. Ship might've sailed on Roseville as they've already started redoing their facilities.
- There are apparently two different pools of insurance money from the dome – the county gets more \$ if they rebuild as is, less if they don't rebuild.
- Current dome and turf are said to be beyond repair (due to damage, glass, etc.)
- Blake said at least a few times, he didn't think the county should be in the business of operating a dome because of its complexity. His preference is a permanent structure / field house.
- NSSA representative in attendance pointed out to Blake that the trend with domes in the metro area is to have them be seasonal – up in October and down in April. This reduces operating costs and increases revenue as they will get year-round use. Asked him to look into converting the dome to seasonal. Also pointed out many school districts and private schools have no difficulty operating seasonal domes themselves. Saying domes are too complex to operate seems to be a cop out. Blake seemed genuinely interested in the idea of a seasonal dome and indicated it hasn't been brought forth as a point of discussion to date.
- Quite a bit of conversation around the value of a dome beyond athletics (bringing in money to the surrounding area, diversity, etc.)
- Blake acknowledged that hockey is generally on the decline in the metro while other sports are growing. The need for turf is real as soccer and other sports become year-round activities.
- Overall Vadnais Sports Center turned a \$200k profit last year – he couldn't put a number on the dome specifically.
- Lots of people expressed frustration that the county sat on this so long with so little transparency.
- Several people communicated the urgency of the matter and its impact on membership.
- Blake said he committed to having a plan in place and communicated by July 1, 2019.
- Also indicated he would work to find other spaces for us to use (but didn't have specifics). Someone asked about conversion of hockey arenas to turf. He said they are booked solid until spring. Unlikely to have anything of significance for 2018-2019 winter season.