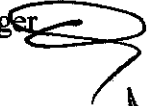



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** City Commission

**THROUGH:** Douglas Hutchens, Interim City Manager 

**DATE:** September 21, 2016

**FROM:** Vince Gizzi, Parks & Recreation Director 

**SUBJECT:** Toronto Blue Jays Workshop Discussion

**PRESENTERS:**

1. Douglas Hutchens, Interim City Manager
2. Vince Gizzi, Parks & Recreation Director
3. Joe Ciurro, Finance Director

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution 13-16 – Dunedin’s Commitment to keeping the Toronto Blue Jays Training activities in Dunedin
2. Toronto Blue Jays Spring Training Economic and Media Impact for Pinellas County
3. Project Timeline
4. Construction Costs

**BACKGROUND:**

The history of Major League Baseball (MLB) in Dunedin began in 1977 when the expansion team, the Toronto Blue Jays, flew south for their very first Grapefruit League season. Dunedin has been the site for every Blue Jays Spring Training season, making Toronto the only major league franchise to have never changed Spring Training cities.

As the Blue Jays evolved from an expansion team to a two-time World Series champion, the baseball facilities in Dunedin also grew from humble beginnings to an international destination. The first ball park on the present site was built in 1930 on land donated by Dunedin Mayor Albert J. Grant, and the field was officially named Grant Field in 1938. The original bleacher seating at Grant Field was replaced in 1954 with a concrete-covered grandstand that seated 3,417; and that capacity was expanded to around 6,200 seats with the addition of a new grandstand and aluminum bleacher seats in 1990. The stadium underwent another renovation in the early 2000’s that resulted in facility upgrades, including a new, two-story clubhouse and office building and a more intimate current seating capacity of 5,509. While the park has been known by many names, including today’s “Florida Auto Exchange Stadium,” the official name of the field remains Grant

Field. The 1990 and 2000 renovations were made as part of contract renewal agreements with the Blue Jays. This was done in response to the City's desire to retain the team for economic and community attraction purposes.

At the March 7, 2013 City Commission meeting, a request was made for City staff to add discussion regarding Major League Baseball in Dunedin/Toronto Blue Jays to an upcoming City Commission Agenda. At the March 21, 2013 City Commission meeting, that discussion took place. At the April 4, 2013 City Commission meeting, Resolution 13-16 was unanimously supported by the City Commission, emphasizing the City of Dunedin's commitment to keeping the Toronto Blue Jays Training activities in the City of Dunedin.

The unique atmosphere in Dunedin, intimate feel of the stadium, and large contingent of Canadians that attend games, have made it one of the "Top 5 Places to Watch a Spring Training Game" according to Sports Illustrated. However, compared to spring training facilities around the State of Florida and Arizona, the facilities are sorely lacking in premium spaces, fan amenities, and player development upgrades. The City's discussions with the Blue Jays have been preliminary and largely "big picture" to this point with discussions focusing on size, space, location, funding and scope of any additional facility construction and renovation that the Blue Jays believe are needed to continue to make Dunedin their spring training home. The current use License Agreement expires on December 31, 2017 and includes two, five-year options at the team's discretion.

Since September 2014, City staff has been in discussions with the Toronto Blue Jays under a confidentiality agreement. This workshop will be the first time in two years that our discussions regarding the Toronto Blue Jays will be discussed publically with our City Commission and residents. This workshop will cover our Dunedin history and partnership with the Toronto Blue Jays. Mark Shapiro, President of the Toronto Blue Jays, will be making opening remarks on their commitment to continue training in Dunedin, and a promotional video produced by the Blue Jays will be shown. Populous, the architectural firm retained by the Blue Jays, will present conceptual site plan diagrams for renovations and expansion of both the existing stadium on Douglas and the existing training facility located on Solon Avenue. Populous' presentation will also include estimated costs and timeline of this project. Brian London, from Bonn Marketing, and Andrew Lafiosca from Nielsen Sports will present the 2016 Economic and Media Value Study for Pinellas County (based on Bonn Marketing and Nielsen Sports Research). Joe Ciarro, the City's Finance Director, will present the potential funding sources. Our Traffic Engineer, Joan Rice, and Stormwater Coordinator, Whitney Marsh, will be available to answer any questions in their respective areas.

### Location

In December 2014, the City of Dunedin requested and engaged Gensler, Inc. sports architectural firm to provide a study that reviewed and evaluated four existing design concepts for new and renovated spring training facilities at four locations in Dunedin. The four sites options included:

- Option Site One: Douglas Avenue existing stadium (including the expansion of an additional onsite practice field)
- Option Site Two: Vanech/Englebert (existing training facilities)
- Option Site Three: Dunedin Stirling Links Golf Course
- Option Site Four: Nielsen site

Note: All of the above options, with the exception of the Vanech/Englebert site, still included split facilities.

Gensler, Inc. evaluated each of these sites based on:

- Available parking
- Automobile accessibility
- Potential neighborhood impacts
- Project construction costs
- Environmental impacts

All of these locations came with extreme challenges, especially if an additional full-size practice field was included at the Douglas Avenue site.

In early 2016, discussions began with the new Toronto Blue Jays President, Mark Shapiro. After a lot of discussion regarding location of these newer renovated facilities, and all of the challenges that come with each location, it was decided that both the City and the Blue Jays would move in the direction of a “game day stadium” on Douglas Avenue with expanded training facilities at the Vanech/Englebert training site.

Populous, at the request of the Toronto Blue Jays, and relevant to the team’s aspirations to improve their training facilities and ballpark in Dunedin, put together a conceptual site plan diagram, and associated designs, for both the Douglas Avenue game day site and the Vanech/Englebert training facilities. Populous also assisted in obtaining cost estimates to realize the project as conceived.

As mentioned in the paragraph above, this scenario assumes that the Douglas Avenue site would be used as a “game day stadium” for spring training and Florida State League games, with all training, development and rehabilitation activities occurring at the Vanech/Englebert site, and

therefore, all renovations are directed at improving fan experience, stadium amenities and game day operations. All of the concepts and options connected with the Vanech/Englebert site assume that, in addition to lands already being utilized by the Toronto Blue Jays training and development facilities, all of the lands that are currently occupied by the Vanech Recreation Complex will also be available for the development of a training complex for the Toronto Blue Jays. If the recommendation is made to move forward with this project, staff's recommendation would be to relocate our three municipal softball fields and dog park through a master planning process within our Parks system or through a potential land acquisition when funding becomes available. Due to the existing undesirable conditions of our dog park being located in a retention pond, Parks & Recreation staff has been actively looking for a more suitable location. Several possible locations have been identified.

**Funding**

Through negotiations, there have been four organizations identified for partnering to fund a combined project of a renovated Douglas Avenue game day site and updated Vanech/Englebert training facilities: Pinellas County, Toronto Blue Jays, the State of Florida and the City of Dunedin.

The total estimated cost of this combined project is \$81 million at this time. The following table represents the estimated requests of each funding partner noted above:

	<b>Estimated Construction Costs</b>	
Pinellas County	\$46.1 million	57%
Toronto Blue Jays	15.7 million	19%
State of FL	13.6 million	17%
City of Dunedin	5.6 million	7%
Total Project	<u>\$81.0 million</u>	<u>100%</u>

The above table reflects the cash or construction value of each partner's requested share. Each partner will be able make its own determination on whether to finance none, some or all of its requested value. Financing costs (bond issuance costs, interest payments, etc.) will be a primary consideration when these decisions are made.

Also, the current assumption is for the Blue Jays and City of Dunedin to enter into a new 25-year facility use agreement, which would commence upon opening the renovated facilities.

## Schedule

There are two schedules to consider.

First is the project implementation timeline (attached) which depicts the sequential process of planning and negotiations, design and permitting, and eventual construction of the proposed facilities. We are in the 2016 planning phase at this time. The intent of both parties is to complete the project in time for opening day of Spring Training in 2019. This is a very aggressive schedule and will require close coordination between the City and the Toronto Blue Jays. Further, it will likely require the Commission to consider waiving informalities in our procurement policies to expedite the process.

The second schedule is the project funding timeline which generally follows below. It will be important to work on several tasks concurrently to meet this schedule. Further, much of this schedule is out of the hands of the City and is dependent upon the yet to be finalized plans of the TDC and Pinellas County pertaining to the “bed tax” funding program timing.

- a. October 6, 2016 - City Commission approval to apply for County and State funds
- b. Late Fall 2016 - Meet with County Administrator, Mark Woodard, to review TDC Funding Application.
- c. Late Fall 2016 – Apply for County TDC funding.
- d. Early Spring 2017 – Funding presentation to the TDC/County Commission.
- e. Early Spring 2017 – Funding approval by County Commission.
- f. Mid Spring 2017 – Update City Commission on County Commission Funding approval and negotiations with the Blue Jays.
- g. Late Spring 2017 – Apply for State funding.
- h. Early Summer 2017 – Approval of State funding.
- i. Mid-Summer 2017 – Final presentation to City Commission, negotiated agreement and full funding proposal

Both the Project Implementation Timeline and the Project Funding Timeline are intertwined. A delay in one, or the ability to accelerate on

one, will likely have an impact on the other. As such, both must be managed carefully with sensitivity to deadlines.

### **Closing**

Again, since September 2014, City staff has been in discussions with the Toronto Blue Jays under a confidentiality agreement. This workshop will be the first time in two years that our negotiations will be discussed publically. To this point mainly “big picture” discussions have taken place. If negotiations should continue, we will be back in front of the City Commission, at the next scheduled commission meeting, asking permission to apply for state and county funds. As negotiations continue, discussions regarding terms and conditions of our license agreement will be worked out. Public and citizens input will also be appreciated as we work through our design and development process.

There will also be an open house for the public that will be held on Tuesday, September 27, 2016 from 5:30-8pm at the Dr. William E. Hale Activity Center, 330 Douglas Avenue. Representatives from the City of Dunedin, Toronto Blue Jays, Populous Architects, Bonn Marketing Research Group and Nielsen Sports will be on hand to provide display boards and to answer the public’s questions on possible stadium and training facilities, economic and media impact, traffic, parking and environmental protection, along with the projected costs, timeline, and funding.

## **RESOLUTION 13-16**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF DUNEDIN, FLORIDA, CONFIRMING THE CITY OF DUNEDIN'S COMMITMENT TO KEEPING THE TORONTO BLUE JAYS SPRING TRAINING IN THE CITY OF DUNEDIN; AND PROVIDING FOR THE EFFECTIVE DATE HEREOF.**

**WHEREAS**, the history of Major League Baseball (MLB) in Dunedin began in 1977 when the expansion Toronto Blue Jays flew south for their very first Grapefruit League season; and

**WHEREAS**, Dunedin has been the site for every Blue Jays Spring Training season since 1977, making the Toronto Blue Jays the only major league franchise to have never changed Spring Training cities; and

**WHEREAS**, the economic impact of Spring Training in the State of Florida has been estimated to be as much as \$753 million annually, with the additional benefit of 9,200 jobs; and

**WHEREAS**, since the year 2000, Florida has lost six (6) Spring Training teams to Arizona, and between 2016 and 2017, five (5) Major League Baseball team facility leases with their Spring Training cities/counties will be up for renewal; and

**WHEREAS**, the license agreement between the Toronto Blue Jays and the City of Dunedin will also be up for renewal by January 1, 2018; and

**WHEREAS**, the year 2000 renovations to Dunedin's Spring Training facilities were funded largely through a State program designed to retain long-term Spring Training franchises; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Florida made funds available for retaining Spring Training franchises in 2006 as well; and

**WHEREAS**, on February 27, 2013, Governor Rick Scott announced that he would work to provide \$5 million annually to be used for improvements to Spring Training facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Dunedin is an ideal Spring Training location. It is less than an hour's travel time from four of the nearest Spring Training sites, and less than two hours from another four, minimizing travel time and expense for teams and fans; and

**WHEREAS**, Dunedin's proximity to beaches and attractions provides Spring Training tourists a variety of activities in which to participate while they are in Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, since 1977, many Canadian tourists have fallen in love with Dunedin and have become part-time residents, adding to the City's tax base without full demand on services; and

**WHEREAS**, at the same time, the Blue Jays have brought many other benefits to our community, from increased tourism to professionally-maintained fields that are used by Dunedin's youth; now, therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF DUNEDIN, FLORIDA, IN SESSION DULY AND REGULARLY ASSEMBLED:**

**Section 1.** The City Commission hereby confirms its commitment to keeping the Toronto Blue Jays Spring Training activities in the City of Dunedin;

**Section 2.** The City Commission urges the Pinellas County Board of Commissioners, the Tourist Development Council, Governor Rick Scott, the State and County Convention and Visitors' Bureau and Senator Jack Latvala, the Pinellas County Legislative Delegation and all Pinellas County Mayors to support the City of Dunedin in its commitment to the Toronto Blue Jays.

**Section 3.** That this Resolution shall become effective upon its passage and adoption.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF DUNEDIN, FLORIDA, THIS 4th day of April, 2013.**

  
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Dave Eggers  
Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Denise M. Schlegel  
City Clerk