

To: Ledell Zellers, Alder
Eric Knepp, Superintendent Madison City Parks

Cc: Vern Stenman, Big Top Events
Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association Council

Breese Stevens Field has been a landmark in the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood since it was built in 1922. For many years, Breese Stevens was closed off to the neighborhood, and we appreciate the investment that the city has made in our neighborhood to bring this historic jewel back to life. With the philosophy of “preservation through use”, the city has committed to making Breese Stevens a public space that will be enjoyed for years to come.

Big Top is two years into a seven-year contract and they have made dramatic strides, increasing the use of the facility and hosting large and small events throughout the warm months. This increase has had an impact on the neighborhood, both positive and negative. Some businesses, particularly restaurants are enthusiastic about the rise in foot traffic. Others, mainly retail establishments, report that large events at Breese Stevens result in a decrease in sales. Neighbors report excitement and enthusiasm for the events, which bring activity they enjoy right in their neighborhood. Others report frustration about the noise from the music and fans leaving concerts, along with concerns about the scarcity of parking and the increase in traffic, particularly vehicular traffic on the East Mifflin bike boulevard.

The city is considering a renegotiation of the contract with Big Top, driven by an interest in bringing a minor professional soccer team to Madison, with Breese Stevens as its home base.

Big Top and the Parks Department presented information about this proposal at a January 24 neighborhood meeting. Neighbors had an opportunity to ask questions and express opinions. The TLNA listserv has been very active with further questions and opinions since that date. In addition, Big Top and the Parks Department published FAQ documents to help neighbors understand more about the proposal. TLNA has captured as much information as possible and published it on our web site.

The TLNA Council writes this document as a way of pulling together our neighborhood’s opinions on many of the issues raised by the proposal. We have organized the neighborhood’s concerns into nine areas and we hope that this will provide input into the negotiations we anticipate in the near future. We are grateful to both Big Top and Madison Parks for their receptivity and engagement throughout this process.

1. The addition of a professional soccer team based at Breese Stevens.

The neighborhood and the TLNA Council support the addition of a professional soccer team at Breese Stevens. It is completely in line with the purpose of the stadium and is likely to be an attraction for many people in our neighborhood, as well as the city. We hope that there is a dedication to healthy interaction between the new team and Madison’s young soccer players. Soccer holds the promise of an activity that appeals to multiple age groups and we’re excited to see more family-oriented sports in the neighborhood.

2. East High athletics at Breese Stevens.

TLNA *strongly* encourages an expanded partnership with East High School athletics, giving them preference on scheduling for their events. East High parents have asked that their soccer players have access to Breese Stevens for their games. To quote one of them, "If we want to maintain and improve a vibrant neighborhood, promoting high school sports in a stadium where we can see neighborhood children competing, and keeping a sports venue where neighborhood families feel 'at home,' has to be one of the top strategies."

3. One later ending time at 11:00 and one at 10:30 for the large concerts.

Big Top introduced this idea as an experiment. TLNA does *not* support later ending times. As a backdrop to this issue, the isthmus is home to many festivals. Marquette Neighborhood Association, SASY, and TLNA have been in preliminary discussions with the intent to work with the city on some standards, including the ending times for large concerts. Most festivals and concerts end at 10:00 and until we can work out a standard, we would prefer that the city not allow any changes to accommodate later ending times.

There is considerable neighbor feedback about the sound of the large concerts and knowing that they will end promptly at 10:00 PM is one thing we can count on. An experiment at this time could be confusing to neighbors. We do acknowledge that a later starting time could be helpful to nearby neighbors who may be able to secure a free parking spot on the street before the concertgoers all show up.

4. 14 concerts per year proposed, up from 7 in current contract

TLNA does *not* support additional large concerts. A new professional soccer team will introduce almost 20 more events with anticipated attendance around 4,000 people per match at Breese Stevens. We would like to absorb this new activity without adding more high-impact concerts.

In 2017 and 2018, one additional concert was added to accommodate the Parks Foundation. TLNA wants the number of large concerts permitted in the contract to remain at 7, with no additional concerts for special purposes.

More than any other issue, additional concerts has received the most feedback from neighbors, who already feel (sometimes literally) the impact of the concerts. We recognize that the concerts are attractive to a large contingent of our neighbors and city residents, and we see that they are one of the features that bring Breese Stevens to life. Having said that, seven concerts is enough attractiveness. We recognize that the large concerts are a big economic driver for the operator, and we share Big Top's hope that soccer games take their place as a primary source of community use.

5. 15 year contract with 5 year option, up from the 5 years remaining in the current contract.

15 years seems like a very long time for a relatively new operation in the city. As we thought about this change, it became apparent that many factors enter into the equation. Parks sees a benefit to relying on a long term arrangement, saving them the time and complexity of negotiating changes. Of course, Big Top benefits, making a long term commitment to secure the soccer team. Both benefit as they can focus on long-term planning and potential additional investments.

The neighborhood is concerned that a long term contract makes it impossible to address changes that occur in the life of the contract, changes that could have a deleterious effect on the neighborhood. The city plans its budget on an annual basis. For any neighborhood use of city parks or streets, applications are made each year. This contract is not renewed on an annual basis, so we encourage the city to build in mechanisms that protect Tenney-Lapham as well as the city and allow the contract to be reopened or cancelled if the terms are not met.

We would like to see a compromise on the length of the contract, such as 10 years with an option to renew for 5.

6. Allow liquor in separately ticketed spaces inside the stadium, tickets sold in advance only.

TLNA does not support the sale of liquor at Breese Stevens. While we appreciate that Big Top has managed the sale of alcohol responsibly, we do not see the need to expand the sale of alcohol beyond beer and wine. It is not generally allowed at similar outside events on the isthmus and could be considered unfair competition for the many events on the isthmus that benefit non-profits yet do not serve liquor. Also, part of the impact of large events is the presence of attendees leaving Breese Stevens after 10:00 and making their way (hopefully!) home or to another venue. We do not want to increase the odds that some will linger, or worse, attempt to drive while impaired.

7. Concert and Non-concert decibel levels.

Big Top is not proposing to make any changes regarding the decibel levels, nor how they're managed. We do request, and Big Top has agreed, to limit the sound level to 75 decibel level before noon.

The sound of concerts has generated a lively discussion in the neighborhood. We appreciate that Big Top has agreed to direct music away from the neighborhood at non-concert events. We would like to see that all events have their sound measured at the soundboard. At this time, large concerts are limited to 100 dBa at the sound board. We would like to have non-concerts limited to 85 dBa at the soundboard, understanding that some events do not have a soundboard. Those should continue to be limited to 85 dBa at the perimeter. This consistent measurement practice would assure us that non-concert events would result in less overflow of sound into the neighborhood and allow for more predictable impact on neighbors.

We really would like to see the sound better contained inside the stadium.

8. Allow concerts on school nights.

School night concerts were not addressed in the current or proposed contracts. However, there is one scheduled for this spring at Breese Stevens. Breese Stevens is an outdoor venue, and we do not support large concerts on school nights. Alternatively, the sound could be curtailed to 75 decibels after 7:00 on school nights.

9. Traffic and transportation.

Next to sound, parking and traffic are next in the impact they have on the neighborhood. Big Top has promised a stronger commitment to provide bicycle parking, both permanent and valet parking. Additional parking is planned at a new parking garage on East Main St. The current contract uses a Fan Access Plan and a Neighborhood Impact Plan, reviewed annually to assess and improve issues that arise. This mechanism does not relieve the neighborhood of traffic and parking issues, but it does give us a voice. Big Top should redouble efforts to steer attendees of concerts and other events away from street parking in Tenney-Lapham and the city should facilitate conversations about establishing resident-only parking permits nearby.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patty Prime', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patty Prime

Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association