

From the Marquette Neighborhood Listserv

Tracy Doreen

Jan 24 10:31 PM

Greetings Neighbors,

Tonight I attended the meeting regarding Bresse Stevens. I estimate there were 70+ community members in attendance, most from Tenny Lapham Neighborhood. There were a handful of us from Marquette neighborhood and our alder Marsha Rummel was in attendance.

Overall the meeting was very positive and respectful. There was excitement about the prospect of a Pro Minor league soccer team making its home at Bresse Stevens. One woman asked if having a women's pro soccer team was a possibility. Big Top rep noted they were in talks currently with a men's team, but in the future maybe a women's team would be possible.

It was not clear to me how much the city would pay to upgrade the stadium for pro soccer. On channel 3 TV news at 10pm it was reported that Big Top wanted to invest \$2million toward the stadium changes for soccer.

Big Top wants to renegotiate their lease and they presented the new terms they wish to pursue. They presented some of their plans, and proposed new terms for a new contract. They noted they would offer more bike parking and encourage biking. There were many concerns about traffic, auto parking, noise levels, a proposal to incrementally double the number of major music concerts each season, and adding liquor sales to public events. Wine and beer are already sold there and several people mentioned there is really no need for the addition of liquor.

A few folks representing local businesses noted that the viability of the stadium was helping keep their businesses viable.

I spoke and mentioned that it was a privilege to live in these neighborhoods and with that privilege came responsibility. It is up to all of us to encourage biking, less auto usage and speak up about our concerns. I asked about the demand pricing that seemed to be happening on Ticket Master who are selling tickets for the music events. Such as the Doobie Bros tix that were selling for well over \$300 each. Why are these 2nd sales or demand pricing happening at a publicly owned venue? Big Top mentioned they were thinking about offering tickets to the neighborhood a day before general sales.

I also asked if there was an emergency plan. Big Top rep said they had a plan for the stadium. But what is the neighborhoods' or city plans? I said (to a response of laughter) "I have a kayak so I have a way off the Isthmus in case of emergency." (I think coordinated emergency plans are paramount.)

One neighbor spoke his concerns about public representatives spending so much time and public funds for this private company to make lots of money. A couple other people talked about this private profit at public expense.

Eric from the parks department mentioned "for those doing the math" ...the stadium expenses would still be there, so we (the city) need someone to manage this. This is a complicated issue and as we-the-people don't have access to know the real profits. What is Big Top making, in comparison to how much total the city gets from and spends on the stadium. So how can we do the math?

Well even though this long, this is still just a few notes. The meeting was two hours long. There is much more that was said.

Thanks for reading.

Tracy

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Jessica Becker – 1/25/2018

Thanks you all for the additional pre-meeting info and for all the big thinking and hard work this neighborhood issue demands.

I'd like to share the pitch document through our channels so there can be further discussion. I think it's also important to point out this is a pitch and to outline the process. I'd like to also encourage people to think about what information is missing, and what questions TLNA can help answer for people. Such as:

-How many soccer events will there be?

-What time will soccer games end?

-How many times will the facility be in use during the season?

-How is the season defined, i.e. The exact timeframe the venue be used?

-How many events take place in neighborhood parks, specifically Central Park, and will there ever be events on the same days or evenings?

-How much revenue is brought in by Central Park events and how is that revenue used?

-How much revenue does Big Top expect annually?

-How much will the city or parks expect to get annually?

-How will this revenue be used?

These are just a few

I'm happy to do this (FB page, group and TLNA listserv).

Thanks for your input.

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Vern Stenman vern@mallardsbaseball.com [tlna] <tlna-noreply@yahoogroups.com>  
Cc:tlna@yahoogroups.com  
Jan 31 at 3:28 AM

I just wanted to take a moment to respond to the group regarding Jessica's questions.  
Here is a quick recap:

-How many professional soccer league games will there be per season?

16-20

-When will games be held? In other words, weekends or weekdays, and will they be daytime or evening events? Focus will be on weekends. Average 1 home game about every 2 weeks. We'll experiment with different start times and most likely end up with a mix of afternoon starts and evening starts. One nice fact about soccer is that games rarely last longer than 2 hrs, thus most of the games would be over by 9. This will hopefully make the games more attractive for families that may attend while also ending earlier than other events and minimizing sound impact on neighbors not in attendance.

-What will the average ticket price be for professional soccer games?

We are very early on in that process and need to continue to research the best pricing options, but I would predict a range of \$10-\$25.

-What is the average ticket price for concerts at Breese Stevens?

Range of general admission tix to date has been \$25-\$65.

-When does Breese Stevens open for the season? When does it close? How many days of this season will the venue NOT be used?

A typical year is March - November. Approximately 180 days in a given year would not have some sort of use.

Vern Stenman  
President  
Big Top Baseball  
(608) 575-4267

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It seems this message, sent last night and earlier today with attachments, did not go through. Text has been copied into the message. My apologies for any duplicates.

I did attend the Jan. 24 meeting. My transcribed notes appear below. As you will see, participants voiced many concerns that need attention. In general, there were few "responses," as in a debate. The overall tone was respectful but concerned. A number of people stayed after the presentations and comments to visit with elected officials and neighbors .

My question is: Can TLNA help resolve the serious issues surrounding increased activity at Breese Stevens Field? Is there a TLNA subcommittee established? Perhaps add to Feb. 8 TLNA agenda.

Marsha Cannon

PS: If you would like a pdf of the notes below and Big Top's fact sheet, I will be happy to reply to your personal email.

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## **BIG TOP/BREESE STEVENS CONTRACT DISCUSSION /Wednesday, January 24, 2018 - 7:00 p.m.**

Festival Foods 2nd floor. Notes by Marsha Cannon w/apologies for any oversights or errors.

About 60 people met to hear about proposed contract changes for the operation of Breese Stevens Field (BSF) and to provide their input.

Patty Prime, Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association (TLNA) President, facilitated. Dist. 2 Alder. Ledell Zellers convened the meeting and asked for a show of hands of those living in the TLNA neighborhood (more than 2/3 raised their hands), or within several blocks of BSF (about 1/4 or more).

Also attending: Dist. 6 Alder. Marsha Rummel, Board of Parks Commissioners President David Wallner, and Parks Dept. Superintendent Eric Knepp.

The contract between Big Top Events (BT) and the City of Madison Parks Division (Parks) covers use of Breese Stevens Field. Among the proposed amendments are additional changes to the facility to allow for a professional minor league soccer team to launch in 2019, a longer term agreement to manage the facility, an increase in the number of concerts, having a later ending time for events, allowing for the sale of alcohol at public events and possible other changes.

### **PRESENTATIONS**

**Vern Stenman**, VP of Big Top Baseball

- \* BT has a 2-yr. track record at Breese Stevens, with 5 yrs. left on current contract.
- \* BT wants a new contract for 15 year + 5-year option. *See Fact Sheet for details.*
- \* BT approx. rent paid would rise from \$30,000/yr. to \$100,000/yr.
- \* City of Madison would invest \$1.6 Million in BSF.
- \* BSF capacity is 9,333. In 2017, 186 events drew a total 83,000 attendees.
- \* **Minor league pro soccer** possibility described by Conor Caloia (BT Chief Operating Officer who oversees BSF). Soccer season would be March-September; would need more seating, new PA system, locker room, and restrooms. No recorded music—just “crazy chants.” Soccer is “family friendly, quality-of-life enhancing.”
- \* Stenman mentioned **bike parking** (per Dec. 2017 TLNA meeting), which is separate from the contract. Ideas include a bike valet, indoor parking under the stands, on-street parking of bikes (e.g. on Paterson St.), and a B-cycle stand at or near BSF.
- \* **Liquor sales** proposed for all public and private events, in separately ticketed spaces. Currently, just beer and wine are allowed for all non-high-school events, with liquor allowed at private parties only.
- \* BT could offer **benefits to the neighborhood**: early sale of tickets for popular events, ticket discounts, and 8 free events for the neighborhood.
- \* BT proposes **max. of 14 concerts** by 2021 (2017, 6; 2018, 7; 2019, 10; 2020, 12; 2021+ 14)
- \* **Sound levels** – stay “as is” which BT lists as: 100 dBA at sound board for concerts and 85 dBA at perimeter for non-concert events.
- \* BT proposes **stage orientation** be restricted to point away from Mifflin St. for all events (not just concerts).
- \* BT proposes **curfew** (ending time) be changed from 10:00 PM for all events to allow two exceptions: (1) at 10:30 PM and (1) at 11:00 PM.
- \* **East High** will continue to use BSF for athletic events, along with the 56ers and Radicals.
- \* BT tries to limit impact on the neighborhood, e.g. Paterson, Bike Blvd. Have worked with the City and patrons.
- \* **Concessions** need new space, especially licensable kitchen area for food prep. An architect’s rendering of proposed food/restroom structure was shown.

**Eric Knepp**, Parks Dept. Superintendent

\* In the past, Parks spent \$100,000/year to maintain & operate BSF and no one used it.

\* “The best way to preserve historic properties is to give them purpose.”

\* Artificial turf replaced poor soil (landfill) that failed to support healthy live turf.

\* Current BSF contract with BT includes \$0 cost to City for utilities. MMSD (schools) pay \$10,000 for 32 nights of use. Bottom line is cost savings for Parks Dept.

\* BSF is designated a community park, for all to use.

\* Soccer has a lot of potential – suggest focus on positive outcomes and avoid negatives (parking, noise).

## COMMENTS

David—lives on Mifflin across from the BSF gate. Add to contract—“limit use of PA on weekends before noon.” He was awakened on Thanksgiving morning at 8:00 AM.

Marsha Cannon — **(1) Amplification:** Existing agreement levels (no greater than a sustained 100dB across all octave bandwidths at the sound production stage for each concert event; all other events at a dB level under 85 at the perimeter of the Stadium) are greater than the Parks Department amplification permit allows (75 dB, 150 ft. from source or 95 dB at sound board or 100 ft from source, whichever is closer). Excessive amplification can cause permanent hearing damage (e.g. 100 dB after just 15 minutes). A neighbor reports kitchen cabinets shaking during amplified performances at BSF; one neighbor is moving because his young son can't sleep with noise from BSF. **(2) Number of Events** – The isthmus is suffering from festival fatigue. From May 18 to Oct. 1, 2017 there were a total of 28 events with amplified music (17 at Breese Stevens; 11 at Central Park). August alone had 10 events. And there are numerous runs, celebrations, parties. Some people can't wait for winter so things quiet down. **(3) End time:** Now limited to 10:00 PM, reasonable in a residential neighborhood. Amplified sound that persists for hours disturbs concentration, can raise blood pressure, affects concentration and the ability to sleep. **(4) Parking** for large concerts and other big BSF events greatly inconveniences the neighborhood. The BT online parking map should encourage patrons to respect residents and park in the green areas. **Bottom line:** It is the concerts and level of unending noise. Excess noise and too many events are affecting people's health and driving people from their homes.

Eric Knepp said Park Rangers monitor decibel levels using a full-octave band decibel meter.

Q: A man asked, “Why should the City pay \$1.6 million?”

A: It's an investment in Breese Stevens Field.

Q: He then asked, “What about getting audited financials from Big Top?”

A: We've never done that before.

Joshua – Moved to E. Mifflin 3 years ago; very happy with events; they're a service to the neighborhood.

Q: Regarding timing of 14 concerts.

A: Not before May 15 or after Oct. 1.

Jessica – Don't need more concerts—too much already. We are already overbooked. Please use space more during the day as a park.

M. Christensen -1100 block, E. Mifflin. Has young kids. Concerts are too loud. People talking on way to cars after concerts keep kids awake—in summer with windows open.

Susan - 1400 E. Washington. Wary of liquor available to entire public and impact on police calls, drunken driving. The number of concerts is leading to a feeling of fatigue. Hard for workers with odd hours to sleep. Please reduce decibels.

Joe - 600 block E. Gorham. Young families keep the Tenney-Lapham school open. 14 concerts are too many; cap it at 10. Curfew at 10:30 or 11:00 is too late for families. Soccer should end at 8:00 PM. Concession stand plan is ugly! It blocks the historic grandstand.

Vern Stedman: concession stand will be integrated with covered grandstand.

Matt - lives on Dayton across from Reynolds Field. He's a soccer fan. How many days of soccer use are proposed? What can be done to mitigate impact on the neighborhood? How to keep kids safe crossing the street when people are arriving/departing BSF events?

Nathan - owns Old Sugar Distillery. Has 2 small kids; hears Memorial Union, Central Park. Likes noise!

John - 10 year resident. Bought home after renting. Likes events, vibrant neighborhood.

Megan - 1100 block Dayton: find a balance with noise and parking. Likes soccer prospect.

Joe - 1300 block E. Mifflin. Seek a balance . . . use as a public park by all. The problem is using a public facility for private profit.

Brant - Brearly St. B-Cycle = good! Street traffic on Brearly and E. Johnson—people are crossing where it is not safe. Parking in general issue. Curfew is a concern—done at 10:00 PM is best. 14 concerts is too many.

Patrick - owns Sal's Tomato Pies. BSF events have had positive impact on business. Proposal put forth is the best possible scenario.

Pat - Pat's Gym on Brearly. Excited re: soccer. Concerts - bring more people into the area.

A woman suggested permitted parking for residents might solve the parking problem.

A "big fan" who lives near BSF wishes the venue was not so monetized. How about a long-term free series that benefits the neighborhood, with no alcohol.

Kurt - reviewed BSF history, covenants on Breese Stevens family gift: if not used for athletics, property reverts to family. Astroturf was funded using \$1.2 million TIF dollars.

A woman said she likes the proposal for soccer, especially if it's women's! Use 1 free day for a neighborhood block party. Has concerns re: liquor vs. beer/wine.

Kevin - Festival Foods mgr. BSF has had positive business impact.

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I'm glad that Big Top is seeking input on this. My biggest concern is the length of the contract, but I understand that a longer term is likely needed to "make the numbers work" for the increased investment in the facility.

Personally, I would love to have the number of concerts and events doubled. They're a great part of living in this neighborhood. We live a couple blocks away on Few St. and have two young kids. While I occasionally can hear the concert if our windows are open or I step outside, it's never disturbed us or woken our children. Of course, I might feel different if I lived on Mifflin or Dayton.

How about half-price concert tickets for TLNA residents?

Adam

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On Fri, Jan 26, 2018 at 11:56 AM, Tyler Lark <[lark@wisc.edu](mailto:lark@wisc.edu)> wrote:  
Hey Jessica and all,

Thanks for assembling all those great questions and for taking the time to investigate! I agree that regardless of individual opinions about Breese, Big Top, and the proposed increased activation, doing our due diligence during this pivotal contract negotiation period will result in better outcomes for everyone involved.

Since you are assembling questions, I have a few more to add to the list, followed by some initial ideas/context about each. However, I am more interested in hearing other folks' opinions and interpretations about each!

**1.) What financial costs might be felt by local residents and the neighborhood?** Are there ways to reward the neighborhood and local residents for potential disproportionate impacts that they may feel from the proposed uses?

The annual rent that Big Top pays to the City to use the facility helps to compensate residents of the City of Madison in whole and also offsets some of the City's ownership and investment costs. However, it seems like nearby residents and the neighborhood bear additional, local impacts--burdens like increased traffic, parking congestion, concert noise, and occasional patron disturbances. Beyond the quality-of-life impacts of the activities (positive or negative), locals may also incur financial costs and benefits of these impacts. For businesses, this seems clearly positive, in the form of increased sales, etc. For residents, however, this might be negative--for example, homeowners help foot the bills for increased wear and tear on our small residential streets and sidewalks in the form of special assessments. Any ideas on how to help alleviate the inequity or otherwise compensate for the unassessed, local impacts that neighbors may assume?

**2.) What additional opportunities exist to encourage local (within neighborhood) attendance and involvement?** Heavily incentivizing, prioritizing, and/or subsidizing local attendance at all events (soccer, concerts, bodegas, etc.) has the added benefit of increasing likely active transportation attendees (ped or bike) and decreasing the traffic / parking impacts.

**3.) Are there any opportunities to increase the affordability, inclusivity, and access to the many increasingly-expensive or otherwise excluding events planned for this public space?**

I appreciated a couple of the comments at the meeting about keeping the space as open and accessible as possible, given that it is a public park. One possible idea in keeping with the public use and nature of the space would be to allow carry-ins of food and (non-alcoholic?) beverages. Similar to "Concerts on the Square", this policy might allow more families and low-income individuals to participate in and enjoy more events, while still allowing Big Top and their vendors to sell their products and make their profit at the public space. I think this could also help foster a more welcoming and community-centric feel by allowing families to have their own picnics, etc, during events like the Catch'n'Reels, Bodegas, etc. This could help attract even more guests, which would better utilize the space, and the increased attendees may still purchase extra items and thus boost Big Top and Vendors' sales to help compensate for any lost revenue from allowing carry-ins. Are there other, additional ideas that could further increase affordability, attractiveness, or access to events?

Thanks for any thoughts! Pat--I like a lot of your suggestions as well! Given this contract is going to define the next 20 years of Breese and the neighborhood, I particularly agree that slowing the process down to ensure the best possible outcomes seems appropriate.

Best,  
Tyler

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We very much agree with the concerns expressed by many neighbors regarding the requested expansion and extension of the Breese Stevens contract. The athletic uses of the field for soccer, Madison East sports and other athletic events are in accordance with the Breese Family covenant. The other uses, particularly large amplified music events, obviously do not conform. Maybe the City attorney will weigh in on this question.

The 15 to 20 year lease, beyond the 5 years remaining on the current lease, is far too lengthy an extension. The plan for 14 concerts, approximately 1 per week during the warm season, is far too many for a residential location. The future impact of the Sylvee venue on the neighborhood is an unknown at this point, but calls for a more cautious approach than the 15-20 year new contract being proposed.

Later end times, many more events with hard liquor sales, many more high-decibel evenings, and many more nights of high parking/pedestrian pressure are not in the best interest of the neighborhood. The residential concentration of the surrounding blocks has mushroomed with the Galaxie, the Lyric, the Breese, and Veritas Village. While a certain amount of entertainment events contribute to the vitality and character of the area, the intensity of outdoor programming being proposed for Breese Stevens is over the top. Consider by contrast the low density residential area around Central Park which has far fewer such events.

We urge the City to greatly reduce the length and the scope of a new lease.

Patrick McDonnell  
Sandy Ward

N. Paterson Street