

# **Springdale Stadium to see fewer luxuries after high bids Suites, party decks likely to go**

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Thursday, May 31 2007

SPRINGDALE – The future home of the Northwest Arkansas Naturals baseball team won't have as many suites and party decks as originally planned.

Bids on the baseball stadium came in above estimates Wednesday, so city officials and architects will be trimming amenities to stay within budget.

The low bid by Kansas-based Crossland Construction, at \$33.4 million, was \$4.1 million higher than the project estimate of \$29.3 million.

"The architect is going to look at the project and find nonessential items that we can pull out to reduce the project cost," Mayor Jerre Van Hoose said. "I was surprised that the low bid came in at what it came in at." The only other bid, submitted by Flintco of Tulsa, came in at \$42 million, nearly \$13 million over the estimate prepared by stadium designer HOK Sport of Kansas City.

Van Hoose said he, Planning and Community Development Director Patsy Christie and the architects have already considered deleting five luxury suites and a party deck.

The mayor said even with the cuts, taxpayers will still get what they voted for in July when a \$50 million bond issue passed by just 13 votes, 2,408 to 2,395, to build the minor-league stadium.

"We're going to have a stadium," Van Hoose said. "It's not an insurmountable deal." Van Hoose and Christie said the goal

"We're in a time crunch," Van Hoose said, adding that there's nothing to be gained by rejecting the Crossland and Flintco bids and starting over. Van Hoose and Christie will report to the finance committee June 6 with proposed project cuts.

The 6,500-seat venue located at 56th Street and Watkins Avenue is to be substantially complete by March 1. If not, the city will forfeit a year's rent, \$325,000, to team owner Rich Baseball Operations. The season begins in early April. The ballpark will host the Naturals, now playing as the Wichita (Kan.) Wranglers, a Class-AA affiliate of the Kansas City Royals.

Stadium construction on the 40-acre site has gone smoothly up to this point. Contracts for earthwork, the parking lot and road improvements all came in at or under estimate. Perhaps some of those savings, coupled with unused contingency funds, can be used to shore up the general construction shortfall, Van Hoose said.

The City Council recently established extended working hours of 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. for the general construction contractor. Eric Edelstein, general manager for Rich Baseball Operations of Springdale, which owns the team, said the bids came as a surprise.

Edelstein, however, said he is confident that city officials and architects can mitigate the \$4.1 million budget shortfall.

"The bids did come in high, there's no doubt about it," Edelstein said. "But this is more typical of building a ballpark than the good luck we've had. There will probably be some compromise, but this will not change the stadium by any substantial means." Van Hoose had hoped that more than two contractors would have bid on the project.

"It probably wasn't a large enough project to bring in stadium contractors from out of the area," he said.

This article was published 05/31/2007

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