

Prospect Meadows gets highly favorable report

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Prospect Meadows Ball Fields project in Linn County has taken a big step forward.

A feasibility study demonstrates strong support for the project, which would include 17 fields on 112 acres near the junction of County Home Road and Highway 13 north of Marion.

Approximately 80 percent of the people who participated in the study were "very impressed" and "very supportive" of the project, according to Richard Bice, the vice president of the non-profit group that wants to build the complex.

Approximately 75 percent of the people in the study think the project would have a "very definite" financial benefit to the community, and 70 percent liked the location of the fields.

"The highlight of the whole thing is that everybody thought it would be good for the community, and everybody also thought it's something that would be appreciated in the generations to come," Bice told the Metro Sports Report Thursday morning. "Those percentages are up there pretty high.

"For these times, it was an extremely favorable result," he said. "We were very pleased with the acceptance in the community. It worked out very, very well."

Bice said 50 business people and community leaders were interviewed for the feasibility study, which cost \$20,000 and was financed by the Linn County Board of Supervisors.

The board of directors of Prospect Meadows, Inc., met Wednesday to discuss the feasibility study and was scheduled to meet again Thursday to plan their next steps. One of those steps will be to make a presentation to the Board of Supervisors, perhaps this month.

"One of the top priorities on our list will be to come to an agreement with the board of

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supervisors," Bice said.

All five members of the Board of Supervisors signed a letter that states the board "strongly supports" the project. The letter, dated March 2, 2011, declared "As the project moves forward, Linn County is likely to consider a donation of land" for Prospect Meadows.

Prospect Meadows, Inc., is a non-profit 501 (c)(3). There are 10 members on the Board of Directors and Jack Roeder, the former general manager of the Cedar Rapids Kernels, serves as general manager for the project.

The project would include eight regulation-size baseball fields, eight smaller fields and a Miracle Field for people with disabilities. There also would be parking, flower gardens, a supervised play area, trails, concession buildings, restrooms, a storm shelter, lighting, a sound system, scoreboards, seating areas and a pond.

The estimated cost of building the project is \$8.6 million. The board of directors for Prospect Meadows, Inc., is hoping to raise \$4.2 million in donations.

If all goes according to plan, Prospect Meadows would open in 2013 and would operate from April 1 through November 1.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Metro Sports Report president Jim Ecker and MSR vice president Mike Koolbeck participated in the feasibility study).