



Thursday, February 1, 2024

Houston Provides Update on Citizen Task Force Study of Boone Rec Complex Location; Praises ‘Very Positive’ Public Input

The chairman of the citizen task force studying the potential location and other details of a proposed city Rec Complex praised the public’s participation in two meetings and expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the committee’s members.

Chad Houston described the public sessions as “very positive, rewarding experiences.” He said the 728 survey responses provided by Boone area residents – it also included listening sessions from senior citizens, youth athletic organizations and High School Students – were instrumental in the committee’s work.

“A number of people appreciated the educational process of what we’re trying to accomplish and how the committee has gone about the process of gathering more data,” he said. “If they couldn’t make it to one of the open houses, they were able to express their opinion on the committee’s website or with a survey response.”

Houston is excited about the next steps in the planning process, which includes submitting a recommendation to the city council. Council members will have the final say on the next steps after reviewing the committee’s report.

“As we learned information about the geographic location preference from the public at our last open house, we’ll dig into things like land make-up, utilities and the infrastructure side of things. We’ll also get a good sense of development opportunities down the road and what the areas can look like beyond the recreation facility,” he said. “This is the most exciting part – how we envision the project and what do we envision (for the surroundings) after the facility is done.”

The city council voted in March 2023 to create the committee, voting unanimously to appoint Marjie Duysen, Denny Hamman, and Curt Nystrom as public members. Then-Councilmember Eli Stines, who was elected mayor last November, represents the city. Other members are Nate Nerem, representing the Boone County Economic Growth Corp.; Boone County Supervisor Shawn Bryant; Boone Park Board member Amy Landus; Boone Community School District board member Jeremy Pritchard; Brenda Dryer and Dan Culhane, representing the Ames Economic Development Corp.; Boone Community Schools EDGE coordinator Lyndsey Hyman; and Nic Fontanini representing Fareway Stores, Inc.

Houston emphasized his appreciation for the work of each committee member. “They put in the time and effort. I thank each of them for everything that they’ve done,” Houston said.

He was also pleased with the involvement of four students from the Boone High School Edge Continuum Program, which offers students a variety of work-based learning opportunities to support their individual career training and preparation. “Think about the experiences they received,” he said, noting how the students learned about planning, facility siting, civil engineering, construction schedules and budgeting, utilities and other infrastructure. “And their input in the process was very valuable, too.”

He noted that the proposed facility’s programming is expected to be “completely new based on the feedback we received” compared to the renderings for the wellness center originally recommended for the southeast corner of Seventh and Story streets in early 2022.

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