

THE BOND BUYER

Spokane, Washington puts stadium bond plan on hold

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Plans for a bond measure to build a high school athletic stadium in downtown Spokane, Washington, are on hold for now as city and school officials discuss their next step.

The City Council voted 5-2 at a Monday meeting to table the proposal, with those in the majority citing confusion over the size of the bond and concern it could overshadow other measures on the November ballot.

The city of Spokane and the Spokane Public Schools district have been discussing partnering on a series of bond measures to improve schools, libraries and recreational facilities.

The school district is exploring a bond measure of about \$500 million to build three new middle schools and modernize others. At the same time, the city is considering a \$77 million bond to modernize and expand its library system.

The plans for a new high school stadium turned out to be a stumbling block between the city and school district, as the agencies were unable to decide who would put that measure forward.

At the Monday meeting, some council members said the process had been rushed, creating confusion. Councilwoman Karen Stratton, who made the proposal to table the stadium bond indefinitely, said the city had been given varying amounts of \$18 million, \$31 million and \$58 million for the proposed bond.

“If there’s a real plan in place and some firm numbers, we can talk about it at a later date,” she said.

Council President Ben Stuckart suggested that the city and school district focus on libraries and school bond measure this fall and wait until next spring for the

stadium. He said he was concerned that discussion over the stadium plan was overshadowing the other two.

“I just wonder if waiting isn’t a smarter option right now than putting it on so fast,” he said.

Stuckart and other council members said they were open to more dialogue. The council and school board are scheduled to meet Wednesday night to discuss the library and school bonds.

The school district has been exploring two options for replacing its existing football stadium located in northwest Spokane. The aging facility holds 30,000 seats and is need of repair or replacement of features such as the scoreboard and the concession building, according to the district.

Under one plan, the district would reduce the stadium at its existing location to a 5,000-seat facility. Under the other option, the new 5,000-seat stadium would be built downtown at a city park, allowing the district to build more recreational fields at the current site.

The proposed site is near the Spokane Arena, which hosts hockey, baseball and other events, and the planned SportsPlex, which would feature an indoor track field and is being funded through bond financing by a separate agency.

Supporters said the projects would create a downtown sports hub that would boost tourism.

Dave Hughes, head coach at Lewis & Clark High School in Spokane, said a downtown stadium would give the five high schools a shared identity at a central location.

“I think it’s one of those times it’s a once in a lifetime event if you jump on it,” he said. “They’ll be talking about how great it is to play downtown.”