

Mike Bohn, Phil DiStefano present facilities upgrades plan to CU Board of Regents

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COLORADO SPRINGS -- Colorado athletic director Mike Bohn promised nearly a year ago to deliver a plan for "transformational" facilities upgrades in and around Folsom Field and Wednesday he and chancellor Phil DiStefano finally delivered.

In a briefing presented to the athletics subcommittee (six of nine members) of the CU Board of Regents at its meeting here on the CU-Colorado Springs campus, the two men outlined a plan for approximately \$170 million in upgrades at Folsom Field but did not provide a specific timetable for when the projects will begin.

However, according to a release from the school, CU is challenging donors to raise \$50 million toward the project and will begin construction when that figure is met by donations.

No tuition, student fees or state funding would be used to fund the project. It will be paid for entirely through private fundraising and money the athletic department earns through television contracts and future revenue from the Pac-12 Network.

The plan includes both renovations to current facilities and new construction, including a new student-athlete academic center, a new permanent indoor practice facility and eventually a new soccer and lacrosse field.

According to the university's release, the first phase of the project would be building the academic center beneath the east side club level of Folsom Field and also taking precautions against shifting ground beneath the north side of the east stands.

The second phase would tackle the expansion of the Dal Ward Athletic Center. The third phase would be building the permanent indoor practice facility adjacent to the outdoor practice fields already located north of Boulder Creek. Redevelopment of the west side stands at Folsom Field is part of the final phase of upgrades.

"I think it's a very reasonable plan of \$170 million," DiStefano said. "Other places might be talking about \$200 or \$300 million. I think for Boulder and for our fundraising patterns that we've had and our history of fundraising this is very realistic. And I would much rather deal with realistic projects than pie-in-the-sky projects."

Regents seemed to respond favorably to the presentation. The board won't have to approve anything until a program plan is completed, which the school hopes to do by December. It's likely the project will be brought before the board in stages as funding becomes available.

"It is my sense that the board, without exception, would like to see us push the envelope on this as much as we can," regent Jim Geddes (R) Sedalia said.

Coach Mike MacIntyre also participated in the briefing telling the board it is important to move forward as soon as possible. MacIntyre referred the board to competitors around the Pac-12 Conference who have either recently completed major facilities upgrades or are in the process of doing so. He specifically mentioned USC, California, Arizona and Washington.

"Our facility is good, but to do what we want to do consistently and what you all want to do, we've got to do something," MacIntyre said. "We're going to give everything we have on the field and we're going to improve and we're going to keep getting better, but to do what we want to do ... all of this has to start moving forward and to be frank with you, it has to start moving forward pretty fast."

Both the practice facility and new soccer/lacrosse field projects would be built near the current football practice fields down the hill and across Boulder Creek from Folsom Field.

In the past year, during the process of evaluating its options, CU learned there isn't enough space to locate the practice facility immediately next to Folsom Field in the northeast corner as originally planned.

Locating the practice facility and the soccer/lacrosse field near the current football practice fields will require moving all or part of the family housing units located in that area now. DiStefano said officials have talked in the past about moving family housing, though it hasn't been included in the 10-year master plan at this point.

"I think now we're going to look at maybe speeding up that process," DiStefano said. "... We're working together on this to make sure we're not displacing our graduate students and married-family housing students, and at the same time trying to move on a trajectory that will get us the indoor practice facility, especially if we start raising more than \$50 million, which is my goal."

CU's plans also include expanding the Dal Ward Center on the east and west sides and enclosing the north end of the stadium, which would add to the capacity of the stadium, which currently seats 53,613.

Improvements to the Coors Events Center are not included in the \$170 million plan outlined Wednesday, but are also planned. Some of the highlights of construction planned at the events center include: expanding the concourse, adding more premium seating areas, building a new weight room, new visitors' locker room and new locker rooms for officials.

The school has already acknowledged it will likely pay for a substantial portion of the project by borrowing against future revenue expected from the growth of the Pac-12 Network.

Notable

MacIntyre is expected to name Boulder native Toby Neinas CU special teams coach as early as Thursday. Neinas, the son of Boulder-based consultant and former interim Big 12 Conference commissioner Chuck Neinas coached the secondary at Montana State in 2012 and has coached at five Football Bowl Subdivision schools since 1995. MacIntyre confirmed to the Board of Regents on Wednesday that he has hired the final member of his staff, but he was unable to talk publicly about the new assistant until the hiring process is complete.

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