

Task force reports: Seating need unmet

By Tom McCaffrey
The Print

Did you see the obituary in the paper Monday? Could you see it? I must tell you that I've been expecting about a week now. Still it is hard to believe, being so young. And only a year ago the man was in the prime of health. At least they had to wait for the actual obituary before writing the obituary. That's journalism for you, my friend, hygienic with pens. Still, the experts do agree on what has to be the cause of death. Hell, when you got a heart attack, you don't take no for an answer. You tell you that you are going to N*B*A die. Without Bill it was obvious that the Portland Trail Blazers were going to forget about repeating as NBA champions again this year. Oregon is being invited to a short wake. After the wake all participants in Blazermania are invited to receptions at their friendly neighborhood where all will be invited to sing "Them Ole' Wait 'Till Next Year Blues." (Despite popular opinion, San Francisco and Philadelphia do not have exclusive rights to this song.)

If you are sitting in the tavern talking of the glorious deeds and cruel twists of fate do you fantasize about actually competing in the contests yourself, live, and out the prejudices of the

box between you and the basketball? Do other Blazermaniacs begin to think to themselves that the city of Denver, Colorado is no bigger than Portland and they got a championship basketball team and they got a professional baseball team to go with them. True, they still haven't got the Trail Blazers but what they got ain't bad considering that they come from the second best state in the union.

This causes the Blazermaniac to think about what might be the difference in the two cities. What attracts three professional sports to one city while Portland has only managed to attract one major league sport? The difference soon becomes obvious, Denver is set up with facilities that can handle major league quality and volume.

Anyone who has tried to get tickets to see the Blazers this year can testify to how badly additional seating is needed to handle the demands for tickets. For these reasons the Memorial Coliseum has appointed a task force to study the possibility of a new sports and entertainment center and issue a report.

The task force is made up of private citizens who were asked to serve on a volunteer basis as a body to investigate facility needs in the city and available options

The Memorial Coliseum's (above & below left) 12,666 seating capacity is inadequate for a city of Portland's size. A citizen task force

to meet those needs; to study costs and operational revenue costs; to study potential sites for development of these facilities; to evaluate capital funding alternatives and estimate the economic and environmental impacts (including the no-build option).

The task force committee hired the Stanford research institute (SRI) to put together this investigation and issue a report. SRI concluded that there is a great unmet need for more seating capacity in the arena. The research group feels that about 4500 seats could be added to the present structure at a cost of about \$9 million.

Other suggestions include a new 8,000 seat facility which could accommodate a full range of floor configurations from basketball to hockey. This would cost around \$14 million. Also being considered is a completely new 18,000 seat auditorium costing \$24 million.

Propositions by SRI concerning the now ragged civic stadium facilities include roofing and ex-

panding the present stadium at a cost of about \$12 million or building a new single form (football and soccer only) stadium at a cost of about \$19 million. Finally, a new 35,000-55,000 multi-form stadium at a cost of about \$28 million. Interestingly enough, Clackamas was one of the most frequently named sites for a potential new facility.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the needs of Portland have outgrown its sports and entertainment facilities. Civic Stadium, a 27,000 seat facility built in 1927, was in deplorable condition to host the professional soccer championships last summer. The Memorial Coliseum with its famous capacity of 12,666 is shown to be inadequate by the overflow crowds at the Paramount paying seven dollars and fifty cents to watch the boob tube.

If Portland wishes to continue to belong to the mainstream of high quality professional talent to the area, then the city must be willing to pay the price that this attitude demands. Putting

set up to examine the problem has determined that additional facilities will be needed in the near future.

up new sports facilities will be expensive and will take years to become reality. In the end there is still no guarantee that any other professional sports will take an interest in Portland. The whole project could turn into needless waste of money and effort.

Portland will be forced very soon to make important decisions about what type of city it will want to be. No matter what is decided two things are known for sure, most good decisions will not be liked by a lot of people and they will cost a lot of money.





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