

Board pleased with Raiders proposed community benefits plan

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LAS VEGAS - The public entity that oversees the Oakland Raiders' proposed stadium in Las Vegas on Thursday gave its blessing to a plan that by law the team had to come up with to ensure the greatest possible participation by the local community in the design, construction and operation of the facility.

The Las Vegas Stadium Authority board does not have to approve the plan, but the team involved the panel in discussions over the document that for months has been the subject of debate at public meetings during which members of the community suggested — and at times demanded — that certain objectives be included. Unlike the tense discussion over a previous draft, the final version pleased the board.

"I think some significant progress has been made there," board chairman Steve Hill said during the meeting. "I certainly think (it) comports with the law and the intent of the Legislature."

Under the plan, minority and female workers would carry out at least 38 percent of construction work hours and 55 percent of operation hours on event days. The team would be required to provide quarterly reports on the hiring goals to an oversight committee during the construction of the project. The committee has not yet been appointed.

The Raiders want to kick off the 2020 season at the 65,000-seat domed stadium across the freeway from the Las Vegas Strip. The team held a glitzy groundbreaking ceremony a month ago.

Guests of hotels and other lodging facilities in the Las Vegas area are contributing \$750 million to the project through a room tax increase. The Raiders and the NFL are expected to contribute \$500 million to the project, while the team has also secured a \$600 million loan from Bank of America for construction.

As required by the law that allowed for the room tax hike, the plan calls for 15 percent of the construction work to be subcontracted to local small businesses. The plan does not include a specific goal for the participation of women- and minority-owned businesses, but it includes strategies meant to encourage their participation in the project. Team representatives balked at a request from the board last meeting to include such numerical target.

Similar documents used in other stadium deals have also included hiring guidelines. In Minnesota, the state set a goal in 2012 for 32 percent of construction workers at U.S. Bank Stadium to be minorities and 6 percent women. The Vikings' project surpassed the goal with 37 percent minority hiring and 9 percent women.

In Inglewood, California, the City Council in 2015 approved an agreement for the construction of the Rams and Chargers stadium requiring that no less than 18 percent of the funds awarded for construction-related contracts and subcontracts go to minority and disadvantaged businesses.

The board and the Raiders face a February deadline to reach a number of crucial agreements for the \$1.9 billion project. On the list is an agreement that would allow the football team of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to use the stadium.

After the meeting, Raiders president Marc Badain declined to identify the sticking points remaining on the joint-use agreement, but said "there aren't many." The Board of Regents must approve the agreement.

"It was a long negotiation. It's still ongoing, but we've made a lot of progress and there's a very good relationship between the parties," Badain said.