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Study: New Ballpark Would Cost City About \$41 Million

By Anne McQuary

Columbia, SC (WLTX) - Tuesday Columbia City Council was presented the feasibility study on if Columbia could support a minor league baseball team.

The study shows that the new ballpark would hold 8,000 fans and cost the city about 41 million dollars.

The city hired Brailsford & Dunlavey to do the study. Mayor Steve Benjamin says council is looking put the stadium at the old department of mental health campus as part of the Bull Street development.

The agency told council that Columbia is a perfect fit for a minor league team and could also be used for other events like concerts.

Councilwoman Tameika Isaac Devine had questions about investing in a stadium without having a solid agreement on if a team is going to come to Columbia.

"I know there is a perspective team owner but if there has to be a certain amount of teams so basically there would have to be a team that has moved here from somewhere else is that right," Devine asked Jason Thompson with the agency.

"Correct there will have to be an existing team that moves to Columbia," said Thompson.

"So in your professional opinion there needs to be that commitment, we are not going to build it and think they will come," asked Devine.

"No one is making any decisions that aren't contingent on the other party delivering so any commitment by the city of Columbia to build a new ball park would require a lockdown agreement from a team to relocate here and enter into a long term lease," said Thompson.

Some council members also had some concern about competing with USC ticket sales and other issues but Mayor Benjamin says from talking with Athletic Director Ray Tanner... They have two totally different audiences.

"His experience is that minor league baseball and USC baseball is very complementary, they have very little season overlap as well as the 7,500 seats they have about 6,000 of them are season ticket holders, so it's a different audience," said Benjamin.

There will be several public forums to discuss the plan. Council does plan to have first reading on the stadium on January 21st.