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UR stadium project facing possible one-year delay

First game scheduled for 2010; cost overrun nears \$9 million

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The University of Richmond is still in the planning stages for a new, on-campus football stadium. A significant amount of money has been raised for the 9,000-seat facility, but a lot of questions remain unanswered.

It appears the first game will not be played in the stadium until at least 2010, rather than 2009 as originally planned.

The projected cost of the facility was estimated at \$11 million in 2003 when UR's Board of Trustees voted to pursue expansion of the existing, on-campus stadium. The estimate has jumped to around \$20 million and is expected to continue to rise the longer it takes to get final approval of the project from the city and Board of Trustees.

The stadium will be built on the site of the First Market Stadium (adjacent to the Robins Center), where the men's and women's soccer teams play now and the football team practices most of the time.

The Spiders have been playing football at UR Stadium (formerly City Stadium) since 1929. The school pays the city \$1 a year to lease the stadium, which seats 21,319 and is located about five miles from campus.

Jim Miller, the Spiders' athletic director, recently discuss the progress of the project.

Q: Where does the project stand at the moment?

A: "We're working to get our request for the special-use permit finalized so we can begin the formal process of getting it before the planning commission and the City Council . Once that's submitted, and all of that information is public record, we'll have more opportunities to talk with the public and meet with them as well."

Q: What is the timetable for submitting this permit and how long should it take for approval?

A: "It won't be formally submitted until the end of November. From what I understand, if we start the process by the end of November, it'll probably be February or March when we have the public hearing of the planning commission. Once we file our documents, the city starts passing that information around and collecting reports back from all the various city entities. So it'll probably be another three months before it goes before the public."

Q: With this process not likely to be on a fast track, will the completion of the project be later than

initially believed?

A: "I think it's more likely going to be 2010. I believe that's the more likely scenario now."

Q: Do you anticipate the cost of the project continuing to rise?

A: "It usually is [going to go up from original estimate], but we think we projected ahead to deal with the projected cost, so I think we'll be fine on that."

Q: How much money has been raised for the new facility?

A: "We have \$20 million now and we're continuing to raise some funds. Five million of that is from the university and another \$15 million is in gifts and pledges. We're happy where we are at \$20 million but we think the closer we can get to \$25 million, the better off we'll be, as far as paying for it."

Q: When will ground be broken for the stadium?

A: "It's too early to talk about that, because we don't know how long the approval process is going to take. We're still working with the neighbors [around UR] to make sure we have everything tied down, as far as traffic goes. There are still a few that are concerned about [game-day] traffic in the area. That's a major issue and we want to be a partner with the city and the community in helping to resolve that."

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