

# Magic Sports presents plans for \$350 million sports complex in Vineland

By THOMAS BARLAS Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, October 25, 2012 2:37 pm

**VINELAND** — Officials with Magic Sports said Thursday their planned \$350 million athletic complex would provide at least 1,000 jobs when all stages of the project are finally completed.

They also predicted that the Magic Sports Complex of New Jersey would eventually have an annual \$250 million “financial impact” on the city and surrounding region, although they acknowledged that an updated study on that issue will be done during the next few months.

Developers of the project, which is targeted for a 289-acre site near Route 55 and Lincoln and Sheridan avenues, also said during a press conference at City Hall that the enterprise will involve no public finances.

“This is privately financed,” said Greg Filipek, who is president of the Gloucester County-based Sora Northeast Development and is serving as the project’s master developer. “We are currently working on that. We are moving along quite successfully. We have been able to secure the money to move it this far.”

“It’s pretty hard to believe that they could get the commitment to finance this project in these hard economic times,” Mayor Robert Romano said.

The next step for Magic Sports involves a Nov. 28 appearance before the city’s Zoning Board. The board will discuss Magic Sports’ request for what developers said are primarily height variances for the project, which is located in an area zoned for industry and business. The project will also need site-plan approval from the city’s Planning Board.

Bruce Farrell, Sora’s development director, said it is hoped that construction can begin next summer. He warned that time frame is “tentative” and could change based on “things we have no control over in the future.”

The project officially presented to the public Thursday is similar to one that Magic Sports proposed several years ago for the Mays Landing section of Hamilton Township, Atlantic Count. That project was never built, although it received preliminary site-plan approval from the Hamilton Township Planning Board. That approval was given despite opposition from residents living near where the sports complex was to be built.

When asked about the difference in the projects, Farrell said he believes the proposed Vineland location

removes some of the transportation problems that raised objections from residents living near the Mays Landing site.

Magic Sports President Ronald Nametko told residents and city officials and business leaders gathered at City Hall that his proposed project is “reality.”

“This is what I’m doing,” Nametko said. “Is it going to happen overnight? No. Can I guarantee it? I have to have your support. If I have your support, I guarantee it’s going to be built in Vineland.”

But not everyone in the city may be behind the project.

Reginald Johnson is president of the homeowners association in the Oak Ridge housing development, which is located near the proposed Magic Sports facility.

Johnson said many residents in the 90-home development are worried about possible traffic and environmental problems that could be caused by the sports facility. Those worries are also shared by some residents in two other nearby developments, one of which is home to many senior citizens.

“Most people are concerned,” said Johnson, adding that many residents are exchanging emails in an attempt to find out more about the project.

Johnson, an accountant, attended Thursday’s press conference. He said the answers given by the developers were, in many cases, vague.

According to information provided by the developers Thursday, Magic Sports has agreements of sale for the land on which the sports complex will be built. The largest parcel involves almost 249 acres and is owned by South Jersey Industries’ Energy and Minerals Inc.

Plans for the sports facility show the project includes a 500-room hotel, an indoor and outdoor water park, conference center, three restaurants, a 10,500-seat domed facility that will primarily be for basketball, and a fitness center. There will also be fields for softball, baseball, soccer and lacrosse. There also is housing for athletes attending events that could last from one weekend to one week.

Nametko said the facilities will be open to the public. He also said the complex would have kiosks where members of the Greater Vineland Chamber of Commerce could display information. That could help get Magic Sports customers to various businesses in the city, he said.

Sandra Forosisky, the city’s economic development director, said economic development means creating wealth. She said that happens by creating jobs, tax ratables and by attracting visitors who will spend money.

“This project does all three,” she said.

*Contact Thomas Barlas:*

609-226-9197

TBarlas@pressofac.com