

**BREAKING**

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# Viability of sports complex at State School to get a workout

By RICK GREEN, THE LACONIA DAILY SUN Feb 28, 2019

LACONIA — A marketing study will attempt to finally answer the question of whether a major sports complex could be viable for the former Laconia State School property.

The Lakeshore Redevelopment Planning Commission agreed Thursday to pay Chicago-based Hunden Strategic Partners \$23,500 to examine the issue.

Commissioner Chris Shumway said it was important to hire someone to delve into the idea.



“We’ve been kicking this sports idea around for months and the only way we’re ever going to answer it is to bring somebody in who is a true expert, and I know you’re not going to get a better proposal or a better price than this,” he said.

The consultant will look into how many potential customers would use such a facility and identify possible competitors if it were built.

Major sports complexes have sprouted up around the country as a way to provide venues for major athletic events and recreational opportunities, while boosting the clientele for hotels, restaurants and tourism-oriented businesses, leading to new jobs and economic development.

Hunden has done studies for sports complex proposals in Saginaw, Michigan; Castle Rock, Colorado; Elkhart, Indiana; Orange County, Florida; and Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, among other places.

For example, in Elkhart, the consultant studied the need for development of a multi-purpose indoor and outdoor athletic development to serve local youth, but also to host regional, state and national events.

Elkhart County has now broken ground on a \$65 million aquatic and fitness venue along with a community center that will include a gymnasium.



In Laconia, the former State School property includes about 200 acres of land at Meredith Center Road and North Main Street. The area commands views of mountains and water and is adjacent to Ahern State Park.

The Lakeshore Redevelopment Planning Commission is charged with turning the state-owned property, once used as a home for the developmentally disabled, into something that will generate jobs and boost the economy.

While no final plan has been developed, the panel has been discussing a proposal that would include a sports complex, a 150-room hotel, 225 homes, 120 market rate apartments or townhomes, 10,000 square feet of retail, a 7,500 square foot restaurant and up to 15,000 square feet of commercial office space.

The proposal also includes 40,000 to 100,000 square feet of clinical, specialty care and other services in a wellness facility.

The consulting firm of Camoin Associates found that infrastructure costs would be about \$12 million, including roads, water and sewer service.

It estimated that such a project would produce 937 on-site jobs while generating \$2.7 million in additional property tax revenue.



The possibility of water or soil pollution at the site has been a concern.

However, Tim Andrews of Nobis Engineering reported to the panel on Thursday that test wells and pits placed at various locations on the property have, so far, revealed no major environmental problems.