

Bears to pay \$200,000 worth of village costs for Arlington Park stadium project consultants

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Arlington Heights is requiring the Chicago Bears to pay more than \$200,000 worth of the village's consultant costs for studies on the economic, traffic and parking impacts of the team's proposed redevelopment at Arlington Park.

The village board voted 6-0 Tuesday night to hire Hunden Strategic Partners for a fiscal economic impact and market analysis that would cost \$118,000 upfront, in addition to ongoing consultancy at hourly rates. The board then agreed to hire the Sam Schwartz firm for a traffic and parking analysis that would initially cost \$85,116 plus future hourly rates.

Village Finance Director Tom Kuehne said the village will pay the consultants through its capital projects fund reserves but will be reimbursed by the Bears through an escrow account the village is requiring of the team.

Officials said the consultants' work wouldn't begin right away, but they want to have experts hired and ready to go when the Bears submit additional plans for village review, should the team close on its pending \$197.2 million purchase of the 326-acre property.

"It's a big enough project -- we would absolutely do this if it were the lions, the tigers or the Bears," said Trustee Jim Tinaglia.

Officials said the consultants are expected to represent the best interests of the municipality and assist the village staff in evaluating studies and proposals that are submitted by the Bears.

Hunden is to evaluate preliminary plans and the financial economic analysis provided by the NFL franchise, including a peer review of the initial economic impact assessment submitted by the team. The firm is also tasked with assisting village officials in negotiating deal points related to financial incentives.

Sam Schwartz will evaluate the initial traffic and parking assessment provided by the Bears' traffic consultant and provide an opinion on the feasibility of accommodating the projected traffic and on- and off-site improvements that would be necessary. That would include a review of the demand on transportation systems like Metra, Pace, ride-share and shuttle buses.

"I hear this a lot from the people in the community. They are very concerned about traffic and congestion with the development of this property regardless of who is doing the developing and what the development is," said Trustee Mary Beth Canty. "I want to make sure we've got people that are keeping the village's interest and the residents of this village at heart when they are examining the potential impact.

"I say all the time I only have two questions: Who is paying for this and how are we moving the people around?"