

UI athletic director makes his case for new facilities

State Board of Education agrees to spend \$1.6 million to design multiuse building

By JOEL MILLS
OF THE TRIBUNE

BOISE — University of Idaho Athletic Director Rob Spear told the State Board of Education Thursday that new facilities are key to turning around losing Vandal teams.

"We have a vision in our department to become a premier athletic program," Spear said at the board's regular meeting at Boise State University.

New venues like a proposed \$70 million events pavilion will go a long way toward recruiting the best athletes, Spear said.

"We have a small window to make a first impression," he said. "Thank God for our residential campus and our outstanding academic programs, because we can sell that."

The board unanimously approved the UI's request to spend up to \$1.6 million from a federal grant to proceed with conceptual designs for the proposed 6,000-seat, multipurpose pavilion. It would give a new home to

Vandal basketball, the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival and other activities.

The grant will also help pay for a financial feasibility study that will determine how the UI could pay for the pavilion, officials said. But the majority, if not the entirety of the funding, may be raised from private sources.

If built, the pavilion would be attached to the north concourse of the Kibbie Dome and share some of the dome's infrastructure.

In a related item, UI Vice President for Finance and Administration Lloyd Mues updated the board on fire safety issues that have existed since the Kibbie Dome was built more than 30 years ago.

Mues flatly told the board that when it was built, Idaho had no state fire marshal and the city of Moscow had no building code jurisdiction over the construction. And, Mues added to gasps from the

audience, no building permit was even required.

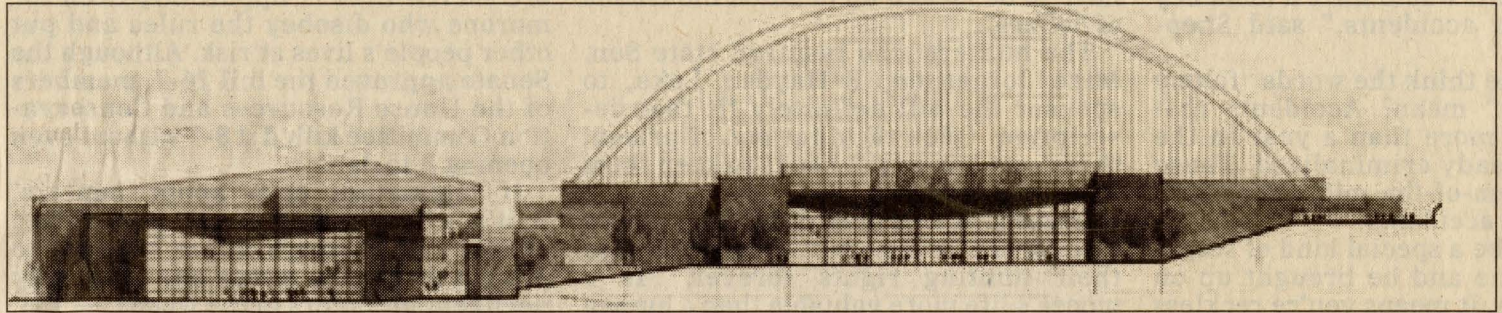
Fire suppression was declared insufficient as early as June 1975, Mues said. To bring the building up to code, comprehensive sprinkler systems and upgraded exhaust fans need to be installed, especially in the dome's



Rob Spear

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University of Idaho photo

A conceptual drawing of the new west end of the Kibbie Dome is shown with the proposed events pavilion on the left.

UI: Plywood end walls need to be replaced

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wood roof. Better exits are also needed, and the iconic end walls — constructed of combustible plywood — need to be replaced, probably with a translucent fiberglass material, Mues said.

Fiberglass panels would have the added benefit of allowing natural light into the dome, potentially cutting power costs, he said.

Finally, the artificial turf in the dome is worn to the point it represents a safety and health hazard, Mues said. The UI will come back to the board, possibly at its next meeting, to ask permission to spend between \$1.5 million and \$2 million of internal funds to replace the turf.

Mues said the UI wants to replace the old turf, which is rolled up against the west wall when not in use, with a palletized system. That would

open the west end for the needed new exits.

Other wishes for the dome include lowering the football field 10 to 12 feet to improve sight lines for front-row seating and add 3,600 seats along the sidelines, and a new academic support center for athletes in the dome's east end.

Just addressing the safety and fire code issues could cost about \$12 million, Mues said. UI President Tim White said he would look for some of the

money in the state Permanent Building Fund. But he conceded that amount is likely to be small, and bonding would be considered for the rest of the upgrades.

The other nonsafety improvements would likely be funded through private donations, officials said.

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