

Virginia Beach

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## **Beach council agrees to sell land for planned indoor sports facility**

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Major League Baseball players will build an indoor sports training facility in Virginia Beach.

The City Council in a 9-2 vote Tuesday agreed to sell 10 acres off Dam Neck Road, near the Sportsplex, to 7 Cities Development Company LLC.

Councilwomen Reba McClanan and Barbara Henley voted against it. Henley said she would have preferred a long-term lease instead of selling the land. She also wanted the council to have more oversight.

The land will first be transferred to the city's Economic Development Authority, which will finalize the terms of the contract.

The buyers include Hampton Roads natives Michael Cuddyer of the Minnesota Twins; B.J. Upton of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays; Upton's younger brother Justin, of the Arizona Diamondbacks; and Tim Hummel, a retired former Cincinnati Reds infielder who played at Old Dominion University. Local sports trainer Michael Hutchinson Call is also part of the company.

The group plans to open a clinic where baseball players with dreams of playing professionally can hone their skills. According to plans submitted to Virginia Beach, the project may include a regulation-size infield, batting and pitching tunnels, and a weight room and fitness center.

It will also include a sports therapy component geared toward promising baseball, basketball and football players who need conditioning help improving their agility, and physical rehabilitation.

"It's a great use for the athletic village," said City Manager Jim Spore.

The city has been trying to develop that area into a hub for amateur athletes, Spore said. The 10-acre property is divided by a Dominion Power easement and had not been identified for any particular purpose. The company has agreed to pay the city \$875,000 for seven acres - a much higher price tag than an early estimate - and has an option to buy the remaining three acres.

The city assessor's office valued the 10 acres at \$517,500 this fiscal year, using data from comparable agriculturally zoned property in the area.

The group had been in negotiations with both Virginia Beach and Chesapeake for a location for the facilities, which could draw young athletes from the region and across the country.

"We're very excited that the council has looked at it so favorably," said R.J. Nutter II, a lawyer representing 7 Cities.