

## **Fairpark board wants to pursue discussions with Hansen, RSL**

[Published on September 22, 2014 in Salt Lake Tribune](#)

The Utah State Fairpark board is eager to pursue a partnership with Dell Loy Hansen and Real Salt Lake. That much is clear. But if the club's owner and the Fairpark are to officially enter contract negotiations regarding the building of a potential minor-league soccer stadium to house the club's USL Pro team, the Real Monarchs, other developments need to progress.

Fairpark executive director Michael Steele said Monday the board came away extremely impressed after [Hansen made his pitch on Sept. 10](#), adding the group believes the soccer complex has great potential to stimulate growth on the grounds. But other shoes need to drop.

Steele said the Fairpark is planning on meeting with Gov. Gary Herbert and the state's legislative leadership in the coming weeks to discuss the future of the Fairpark. And Hansen's stadium is one of the key ingredients on the docket.

The Utah State Fairpark Corporation's lease on the Fairpark grounds expires on June 30, 2017, but upgrades on facilities within the park need to be made for the longevity of the grounds.

Steele said per the terms of the lease, any improvements made on the grounds over \$100,000 immediately become property of the state of Utah. Which means Hansen's potential stadium — after the planned 40-to-50-year-lease — would be donated to the Fairpark Corporation and then become an asset of the state. Now, it's ensuring the landmark deal benefits the Fairpark and its long-term survival.

"I haven't heard really of any detractors. It's about getting the correct deal for the team and the Fairpark."

*--Michael Steele, Utah State Fairpark Executive Director*

"The board wants to pursue this and that was right from the meeting," Steele said. "They want to pursue discussions with Real and Dell Loy ... but by no means will this soccer complex save the Utah State Fairpark. It will help."

Steele said the rodeo grounds must be renovated and an expo center must be constructed to help boost the overall versatility of the Fairpark. He also mentioned upgrading other buildings on the

grounds in order to be "up-to-par, first-class facilities" that can help generate revenue year round, along with the potential stadium, rodeo

grounds and expo center. Located a few blocks west of downtown Salt Lake City, the Fairpark has been in discussion with the state on extending its lease on the 65 acres despite decades of dealing with struggles and lack of funding to maintain the historic buildings.

Hansen's stadium pitch — estimated to be as much as \$18 million — would be paid for solely out of his own pocket, which would allow the Fairpark to avoid needing taxpayer money for upgrades or subsidies from the state. The stadium's addition could feature fiscal infusions to then reinvest in the park as a whole, as noted by Fairpark board chairman Roger Beattie on Sept. 10.

Steele said on Monday discussions have featured the revitalized rodeo grounds being designed and implemented next to the soccer complex, so the two could use similar infrastructures throughout the year if need be. The stadium, which would feature artificial turf, is expected to seat 6-to-8,000 and be ready for the Monarchs to begin play in 2016.

In the mean time, Steele anticipates further negotiation with Hansen, Gov. Herbert and the legislature to continue in the next couple of weeks. While the Fairpark board wants to engage in official discussions with RSL, the next part of the process turns to the nailing down how a new master plan of the grounds can generate revenue and impact business along 10th West and North Temple. – Chris Kamrani ♦