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"We enjoy playing in the Dome, but we cannot financially pay that amount for at the most, five games a year," she said. "From my perspective, the cost is focused on USD and the cost of their building."

According to the information gathered, USD plans to make a little over \$8 million worth of improvements to the Dome over the next 15 years.

The new deal would help pay for the upgrades to the Dome, USD Vice President for Finance and Administration Rich Van Den Hul said.

"We started talking about updating the Dome, and with all the needs, it's only fair to talk about paying contemporary amounts," he said.

Some of the improvements that are planned for the Dome include a new turf (\$1 million), permanent seating/bleacher replacement (\$1.6 million), resurfacing the parking lot and new lighting for the lot (\$885,000) and mechanical upgrades that would make the Dome more energy efficient (\$628,120).

"These are critical projects to keep the Dome not only in good shape, but also the premiere venue in the region," Van Den Hul said.

But Girard said USD, while often using facilities at Vermillion High School, has ignored the costs of making needed upgrades to the school district property.

"They put out their expenses, and we used ours as well, but they wouldn't let us use our figures," she said. "They want us to share the burden for the cost of the (Dome) repairs. It's a great facility, and

we are lucky to use it, but we can't afford it at that price."

Girard said the school board must deal with the expense of replacing the high school's roof – a building that houses gyms and other facilities used often by the university. Girard said USD uses the high school's fine arts auditorium throughout the year.

"I'm not sure the university knows how much USD students use our facility," she said.

An original Dome-related expense covered by the school district when the USD sports facility first opened 30 years ago was the purchase of the artificial surface for the football field. That expenditure was part of the original agreement between the school district and the university that allowed the Tanagers to play football in the Dome.

Vermillion High School Athletic Director Jason Huska said a similar proposal offered in USD's new contract offer calls for the school district to cover the estimated \$900,000 cost of replacing the current artificial turf in the Dome. Vermillion Superintendent Mark Froke also said the school district has talked about the cost of replacing the artificial surface.

"A final recommendation was made that the school district would consider as an option to share the cost of a new turf," he said.

Van Den Hul said USD looked at other schools in the state to compare the agreements that were worked out to other site upgrades.

At Black Hills State University, the university, school and city all put in one-third of

the \$1.5 million cost to improve the facilities there.

In Aberdeen, the Northern State University and high school paid \$3 million to upgrade the athletic facilities. The school district paid \$1.2 million and the university paid \$1.8 million.

A recommendation coming out of the discussions by the DakotaDome Use Advisory Committee is that an initial capital investment of \$1 million to \$2 million from the Vermillion School District and the city of Vermillion be made for a term of 15 years, with an annual use charge to be determined by all parties to the agreement.

The Vermillion School Board and administration balks at that amount, noting that its limited financial resources must be spent to maintain its own facilities. Also, at this time, at least, it makes better financial sense to the school board to consider investing a lesser sum of money over the long term into developing its own athletic facilities.

"We have limited resources and if we have to pay much more to play in the Dome, it would take away resources that we provide to the students, such as musical instruments, computers or books for the library," Froke said. "USD has many costs, but so does the district. There is a certain level that isn't affordable."

The source of the revenue the school district currently pays USD so that the Tanagers may play football in the Dome comes out of the district's capital outlay budget, which is increasingly being stretched to its limit as the district looks to future maintenance of its properties. Froke said the local school district is nearing the limit of what it may spend in that budget.

The higher dollar figures coming from the university has the district exploring the costs of adding lights and seating and transforming what has always been a practice field located within the high school's track into an outdoor gridiron for the Tanager football team.

The district had been looking at upgrading the bleachers at Vermillion's track in order to host a South Dakota state high school region track meet in the future, and to bring in more future events, Huska said.

According to Froke and Huska, the upgrades would cost around \$360,000.

Additional information gathered by school district administrators is based on the premise of upgrading the track and football field facilities to host football games. Those upgrades include home and visitor seating for approximately 2,000 people.

Those upgrades cost approximately \$400,000 more than if the district made improvements to the track

facility alone. The total cost of \$760,000, Froke said, could be paid with revenue from the district's capital outlay budget.

Girard said most of the members of the community she has talked to support a new football facility for the Tanagers.

"I have talked to a lot of people and know what they are feeling and they said to build a new facility," she said. Girard said the school board is hoping to make a decision soon because the facility would have to be ready by late August in order to be ready for the football season.

If the district does go in the direction of a new facility, Van Den Hul said he would work with the school board to allow the Tanagers to play another year in the Dome if the new field wasn't ready in time for the season.

But he also said he hopes it doesn't come down to that.

If Vermillion does build a new facility, it would create more scheduling opportunities

for Coyote athletics, but USD Athletic Director Joel Nielsen said despite the challenge, he has enjoyed working with Huska and Vermillion athletics.

"It's a challenge, but I've been more than happy to accommodate; we value it and enjoy having high school games at the Dome," said Nielsen, who was on the committee but isn't handling the negotiations. "Anytime you can open up campus to anyone, it's positive for the university."

Girard said the school board will hopefully be at a point to make a decision to either stay with the Dome or make a decision by Feb. 8.

Van Den Hul still plans on meeting with the district and Froke stressed that the door is still open for negotiations.

"We are interested in being a good community partner, but we also have to look out for the good of our students and make sure they are treated fairly as well," Van Den Hul said.

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Sanford Vermillion hosting Health & Wellness Fair

It is important to be proactive about your health and participate in annual screenings. Early detection is vital for appropriately managing and preventing chronic health conditions.

Sanford Vermillion Medical Center will host a Community Health and Wellness Fair on Saturday, February 6 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Sanford Vermillion is partnering with USD SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) as well as students in Health Professions programs at the University of South Dakota to provide a wide variety of screenings and activities to promote health and wellness awareness.

Free health screenings will include blood pressure, blood sugar, body fat/body mass index analysis, lung/breathing test, Dermascan™ skin damage screening, heel ultrasound – osteoporosis screen and oral cancer screen. Reduced cost screenings available include cholesterol – Total/HDL ratio - \$15, PSA Blood screen for men - \$20. Community Blood Bank of Sioux Falls mobile unit will be onsite for blood donations. One new feature this year will be a Healthy Cooking Demonstration at 11 a.m.

The theme "Know Your Numbers," focuses on the importance of knowing your individual 'numbers' and understanding what they mean with respect to one's overall

health and wellness. Community members will also learn about financial awareness as related to health services.

There is something for everyone – including children. The Children's Fun Room with supervision by the SIFE students will include fun activities while the Junior Health Fair next door will feature health related activity stations such as dexterity, sensory box, monster walk and agility to name a few. Starburst the Clown will be on hand to entertain the kids as well.

For more information regarding the Community Health and Wellness Fair, call 605.638.8465 or check our website at sanfordvermillion.org.

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