



Kezar Stadium seen Wednesday, March 16, 2016. (Ekevara Kitpowsong/ Special to S.F. Examiner)

SF welcomes new professional soccer team to Kezar Stadium

MICHAEL BARBA / Mar. 18, 2016 12:00 a.m. / NEWS / THE CITY



The City's professional soccer team — the San Francisco Deltas — has a new home.

The Recreation and Parks Commission on Thursday approved a permit for the Deltas to host 15 to 20 home games a year at Kezar Stadium for half five years, a win for soccer fans over dozens of neighbors who [opposed a provision](#) in the permit allowing the sale of alcohol during games.

The Deltas, a new Division II team with the North American Soccer League, are expected to begin playing at the stadium next year. Per the agreement with Rec and Park, they will sell 3,000 tickets for \$20 or less each game and donate another 200 tickets to local youth and nonprofit groups for seniors.

"This venue will continue to strengthen the fabric of our community and will fill an incredible need that exists in The City," Commissioner Gloria Bonilla said at Thursday's hearing. "I trust that all of the outstanding issues will be addressed and that the proposed venue will be in really strong hands."

Before its first season, the team will complete some \$460,000 in renovations to Kezar Stadium — including replaced benches, stadium lighting and updated locker rooms — and an estimated \$40,000 in improvements to Boxer Stadium in Balboa Park, where the team plans to practice.

The cost of renovations at both stadiums will be credited toward a \$30,000 per year permit fee, according to the department.

Dana Ketcham, a manager at Rec and Parks, said Kezar Stadium is an "incubator home" for the Deltas, "not their permanent home." When talks of bringing the Deltas to The City began last fall, the department was told a new stadium in the Bay Area is in the works for the team.

"The very first thing we did with the Deltas is said we don't want to impact our school use," Ketcham said.

Delta's CEO Brian Andres Helmick told commissioners he has been working with the department to make sure that the games do not conflict with school events at the stadium, like track meets and football games. "This was not something that was taken very trivially," Helmick said.

He also tried to calm concerns about drunken soccer fans and traffic jams. "We are perfectly aligned [with RPD]," Helmick said. "It's bad business if we have any type of problems."

Just before construction of the current iteration of Kezar Stadium was completed in 1991, the commission established an interim policy that prohibited alcohol in the stadium, according to Ketcham.

The interim policy was supposed to last for two years but is still in place. The commission has since allowed beer gardens to sell alcohol just outside the stadium.

With the approval of the new permit, beer and wine will be sold throughout the stadium while hard alcohol will be sold in designated areas.

Ketcham said 11 community groups were in favor of the permit, while three were opposed. More than 1,400 letters of support were sent to the department — 23 other letters opposed the permit.

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