Higher ed pressured to limit tuition hikes

‘Substantial’ cuts loom on horizon.

JEFFERSON CITY (AP) — Gov. Jay Nixon pledged yesterday to pressure Missouri’s colleges and universities to hold down tuition increases even while warning they likely will take “substantial cuts” in the next state budget.

Nixon also encouraged Missouri’s higher education institutions to eliminate lightly used degree programs, collaborate on redesigning common courses and try to boost the number of people obtaining college degrees.

“We want excellence,” Nixon said. “We’re taking a much more comprehensive and — in my view — thoughtful view of what we can do to position our institutions to competitively educate more students for years to come.”

Nixon outlined his education goals yesterday to several education reporters invited to his Capitol office.

Missouri colleges and universities are in the second year of a tuition freeze they voluntarily implemented as part of a deal brokered by Nixon to avert deep state funding cuts. But the deal expires before the 2011-12 academic year.

Nixon said he expects “substantial cuts” next year for higher education institutions — in excess of the roughly $50 million cut this year — because of the expiration of federal stimulus money for states. But he said it’s too early to say exactly how large of a cut he will recommend when he proposes a budget in January.

Regardless, Nixon said he is not expecting colleges and universities to respond with substantial tuition increases.

“I’ll use the resources at hand of the chief executive of the state to keep downward pressure as best I can” on tuition, Nixon said. He declined to specify what percentage of a tuition increase he would consider to be reasonable.

While state funding has fallen and tuition remained flat, Missouri’s colleges and universities have experienced significant enrollment increases.
About 37 percent of Missouri residents have college degrees. Nixon wants that to rise to 60 percent by 2020, an increase that cannot be accomplished solely by getting more high school graduates to attend college.

To attain that mark, Nixon said some of the roughly 746,000 Missourians who already have college credits but not degrees would need to return to school to complete their coursework.

Nixon said he also wants to eventually move Missouri toward a higher education funding model based on the school’s missions and performance, instead of enrollment.
Nixon sets goals for Missouri colleges

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

Gov. Jay Nixon is pressuring Missouri’s public colleges to keep tuition hikes low, while warning that “substantial cuts” in their budgets are coming.

He told reporters that he is calling for discarding degree programs with too few graduates, redesigning “common courses” and reducing duplications.

The goal, he said, is to increase the portion of Missouri’s population holding a college degree from 37 percent to 60 percent in a decade.

“What we want is excellence,” Nixon said, adding that the state’s two- and four-year colleges are on board.

University of Missouri-Kansas City Chancellor Leo Morton said Thursday that he isn’t sure Nixon’s goals are attainable, “but it certainly is the kind of thing we all should be shooting for. This is about us being competitive globally.”

The state’s four-year schools already propose eliminating some 60 degree programs, and that list will grow.

Sharing faculty is being discussed, said Steve Graham, academic affairs official at the University of Missouri.

University leaders expect to raise tuition but are not offering any projections. Nixon, too, was mum about what he considers a reasonable increase.

“We are not going to be able to hold another zero gain in tuition,” Nixon said. “But I would like to keep a downward depression on tuition increases.”

The governor did say the cuts he’ll propose to legislators will be more than the $50 million in cuts the universities took this year.
Nixon defends approach on higher-ed cuts

Governor denies micromanaging.

By Janese Silvey

When Gov. Jay Nixon ordered a statewide review of college degree programs that graduate only handfuls of students, University of Missouri faculty members cried foul.

Why start with academics, some questioned, suggesting instead that the state first ask universities to review top-heavy administrative structures.

Nixon shot down the idea yesterday.

"It's not in the best interest of quality education for me to attempt to micromanage institutions," he said.

That's ironic, said Stephen Montgomery-Smith, a math professor and member of MU's American Association of University Professors. "The irony of Nixon's response is obvious since, of course, micromanaging is precisely what" the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Coordinating Board for Higher Education "are actually doing," he said.

Under Nixon's charge, the higher education department is requiring colleges to submit to the state a whittled-down inventory of degree programs that produce, on average, fewer than 10 bachelor's degrees, five master's degrees and three doctoral degrees a year. MU is still reviewing its list of 75 programs that fit those criteria, but other institutions have submitted reports to the state. So far, colleges and universities have agreed to eliminate 61 degree programs across the state.

Nixon said those institutions are voluntarily sacrificing degrees. "This isn't some 'cat if from the governor," he said.

The goal is to avoid mission creep, Nixon said. He used UM's Rolla campus as an example, saying the Missouri University of Science and Technology should stick to what it knows and not try to expand into the humanities. With five or six people in a program, he said, there's "no way you're going to deliver the kind of excellence necessary."

Tell that to the faculty within MU's School of Accountancy, though. The school, which awarded one doctorate last year, is considered one of the top accountancy programs in the country, ranking ninth in a Chronicle of Higher Education report.
"The degrees are more than products. The quality of education and research training of students matter greatly, and most people recognize this," said Sudarshan Loyalka, a curators' professor of nuclear engineering.

Victoria Johnson, an associate professor of sociology, said she fears Missouri lawmakers don't understand the nature of a public land-grant university.

MU would have no financial shortages, she said, if it could charge tuition for the actual costs of education at a high-quality research university.

"Because MU is a public institution, the state is obligated to subsidize the lost cost of tuition to keep tuition low while maintaining the quality of the university," Johnson said. "The legislature has not lived up to its public obligation over the last decade, and the quality of the university continues to erode. It may not be politically popular to increase state revenue for higher education, but you get what you pay for."

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Student reporters shut out of meeting

By Janese Silvey

Thursday, November 18, 2010

A handful of student reporters were denied access to a meeting with Gov. Jay Nixon yesterday during which he spoke to invited reporters about higher education.

The Tribune and reporters from The Associated Press, the Kansas City Star, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Stateline and the Springfield News-Leader were asked to meet with Nixon to talk about his agenda for higher education.

Reporters from other media outlets and publications, including the Columbia Missourian, weren’t invited.

Phill Brooks, director of the University of Missouri’s state government reporting program, showed up with a Missourian reporter and several other student reporters in the governor’s lobby before the meeting in hopes of sitting in. But they weren’t allowed into Nixon’s chambers when the meeting started, Brooks said.

“They said it was invitation-only and that the governor wanted a small group, and that only picked people were going to be allowed to attend,” Brooks said.

Christy Bertelson from Nixon’s communications office said this morning Nixon asked for a small group discussion.

“He wanted to give some background regarding coverage of higher education for higher-education beat reporters and reach out to a couple of folks we know who write about higher education for national media outlets,” she said.

The Missourian covers higher education but does not have one single higher-education reporter. Still, Missourian Executive Editor Tom Warhover said, “it’s ironic that the governor would not include media representatives who aggressively report on institutes of higher education, like the Missourian.”

Turning the students away has riled some, including Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia.

It flies in the face of free press, he said, “for politicians to pick and choose pet reporters. It goes against the very grain of what the University of Missouri School of Journalism stands for.”
Charles Davis, associate journalism professor at MU, also said he had a problem with a governor making a “favored list of reporters he’s going to talk to and exclude other people who want to engage in the same subject.”

Plus, Davis said, “It’s highly ironic that in a conversation about higher education, he excludes students.”

Brooks said the incident is the latest in a string of bad media-related decisions on Nixon’s part. During his first news conference early last year, Nixon angered reporters by asking them to turn in cell phones before entering his chambers.

“Nixon’s administration started with a bit of a difficulty with news media,” Brooks said, “and it’s been less than ideal since.”

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When Not Taking Drugs Is a Problem

By Rick Nauert PhD Senior News Editor  
Reviewed by John M. Grohol, Psy.D. on November 19, 2010

Although Americans have been pegged as a drug-taking society, non-adherence to medications is a serious problem. Experts believe the failure to take prescribed medications costs thousands of lives and billions of dollars each year.

To address this problem, researchers at the University of Missouri have developed an intervention strategy that is three times more effective than previously studied techniques at improving adherence in patients.

Cynthia Russell, associate professor in the MU Sinclair School of Nursing, found that patients who used a “Continuous Self-Improvement” strategy drastically improved their medication adherence.

The strategy focuses on counseling patients to understand how taking medications can fit into their daily routines. Nurses meet with patients and discuss their daily schedules to identify optimal times to take medications and safe places to store their medications.

“Continuous Self-Improvement is a personalized strategy, and the scheduling is different for every patient,” Russell said.

“Finding the right place and time for patients to take medications can be as simple as storing the pill bottles in their cars so their medication will be available for them to take during the morning commute to work.”

In the study, kidney transplant patients were given pill bottles with caps that automatically recorded the date and time whenever they were opened. Each month, a nurse reviewed the results in illustrated reports with the patients and discussed how they could improve their adherence.

The researchers found significant improvements among patients’ adherence rates. The results indicate the technique is three times more effective than previously studied techniques.

Russell recommends that patients meet with nurses to implement the strategy a few months after medical procedures, when they have returned to their normal routines. During follow-up appointments, patients can discuss potential problems and strategies for taking their medications.
“Ideally, all patients should use electronic monitoring pill bottles because it enables them to see computerized graphs of their previous month’s medication schedules and medication taking,” Russell said.

“We found that patients enjoyed seeing their results at each meeting and were interested in receiving the feedback.”

An estimated 35 percent of kidney transplant patients do not take their medications daily and 75 percent do not take their medications at the correct times. It is important for transplant patients to take medications correctly because incorrect dosages could result in side effects, rejection of the organs or death.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU engineering professor suspended

By Megan Cassidy
November 18, 2010 | 9:38 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Greg Engel, an associate professor with MU’s College of Engineering, was suspended indefinitely from classroom teaching this week after accusations of gender and racial discrimination were brought to the attention of his department chairman.

Noah Manring, chair of the department of electrical and computer engineering, said details about the complaint could not be disclosed.

"The matters pertain to personnel issues that are following a standard grievance process, brought against Dr. Engel by students in his class," Manring said in an e-mail.

Dean Lex Akers echoed Manring’s citing of personnel issues and said he was unable to comment further.

Engel was informed of the suspension by e-mail Saturday. Although he said he is uncertain about his exact course of action, he plans to protest the suspension.

"At this point, I don't have a response," Engel said. "There has been no hearing, so I can't appeal."

He said the e-mail cited "sexual and racial discrimination" as grounds for the action, but the duration of the suspension was not included.

He said the issue is rooted in a case of academic dishonesty brought against three of his students earlier this semester. The students, all female and Chinese, claimed that plagiarism charges were based on gender and race.

Students have a number of procedures they can follow when filing a complaint against a professor, said Noel Euglish, director of MU Equity for the Chancellor's Diversity
Initiative. Options include taking a complaint to a faculty member or working through the dean's or provost's office.

Engel's attorney, George Smith, said he did not see anything improper about the way the students filed the complaint, but he believes Manring mishandled the situation once it was in his hands.

"There are procedures that the department chair is supposed to follow when complaints are filed through him, as they were in this case," Smith said.

Smith said after a complaint is filed, a department chair typically has a discussion with the faculty member to try and resolve the issue internally.

A discussion took place Friday, Smith said, with an agreement about a plan of action, but another meeting was held Saturday with a different outcome.

"My client learned via e-mail that a 'special meeting' was held on Saturday, where they voted to suspend him not only from the class where students complained, but also from a class where there were no complaints," Smith said.

He questioned the propriety of the Saturday meeting.

Engel said he plans to explore internal options, such as writing letters to MU administrators, before looking into legal action.
UM’s change to student IP rights nets grant

The University of Missouri’s push to commercialize more intellectual property bagged it a $100,000 grant from the Kansas City-based Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, one of the largest foundations in the country.

The Kauffman foundation, which promotes entrepreneurship, awarded the grant to help MU advance student entrepreneurship. As part of the grant, the Reynolds Journalism Institute will document how student entrepreneurs develop and commercialize their ideas. The grant will also support a student venture capital fund.

“The University of Missouri exhibits a strong commitment to bringing the innovations developed on campuses into the commercial marketplace, which benefits society and ultimately enhances economic growth,” Carl J. Schramm, Kauffman Foundation president and CEO, stated in a release.

The grant stems from the university’s recent change in its policies for student ownership of intellectual property. The winning team of RJI’s 2008-2009 student competition to develop iPhone apps negotiated with the university to retain ownership of its winning app, NearBuy, which is still a top-rated program.

Those negotiations prompted the university to amend its policies on student intellectual property rights. At the time, its rules for undergraduate ownership were unclear. Here’s a story we did on that case a few months back.
MU, Sierra Club at odds on plans to burn wood instead of coal

By Trupti Ram
November 18, 2010 | 7:20 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA ~ Is brown the new green?

The Osage Group of the Sierra Club says no.

The environmental group called Wednesday for a general moratorium on burning woody biomass and raised questions about MU’s plans to replace coal with wood in a $62 million boiler at the campus power plant that’s expected to be operational next fall.

The MU Power Plant currently has four boilers that burn coal, tire-derived fuel and biomass and one boiler that burns natural gas, said Karlan Seville, communications manager for campus facilities.

Hank Stelzer, associate professor of forestry at MU, said the new boiler will use a combination of biomass; 80 percent will come from woody biomass and 20 percent will come from other plant material, such as switchgrass and corn cobs.

“We don’t want to have a system that’s not sustainable,” he said.

While the Osage Group supports MU’s move away from burning coal, it does not believe that wood is the best transitional fuel.

Ken Midkiff, conservation chair for the Osage Group, prefers natural gas because it’s clear that gas emits less of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide than coal, while it is not yet clear how biomass emissions compare. He raised three concerns:

- The potential release of more carbon dioxide from the burning of woody biomass than is expended from coal burning.
- The availability of woody biomass.
- The sustainability of wood harvest.

Midkiff said the key question is whether forests can recover fast enough to make wood burning carbon-neutral.

Stelzer said the entire life of a forest must be considered in this discussion. "The trees will take up as much, if not more carbon over the life of a forest," said Stelzer, who is collaborating with the power plant.

"We love that they're replacing a coal boiler," said Paul Rolfe, president of Coal Free Mizzou. "We want to see more changes like that in the future."

Rolfe said he'd rather have the issues that come with biomass burning than the issues that come with burning coal.

"Coal is so destructive in its process, from mining to burning to waste," he said.

About 15 students gathered Thursday afternoon at Carnahan Quadrangle as part of Coal Free Mizzou's call for MU to move beyond coal and toward clean energy. The event featured speeches from two MU sociology professors: Larry Brown and Rebecca Scott.

"There's no get out of jail free card when it comes to energy," said Scott, who has published a book about mountaintop coal removal.

Brown said "now is the time to increase the pace of this movement."

"We are beyond coal," he said at the event.

The power plant's change to biomass is intended to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, Seville said. She said the MU boiler will be more efficient because of the plant's use of waste heat in the form of steam for heating and cooling.

The change will reduce the amount of coal that's being consumed by the power plant, Stelzer said. The $5 million savings can then be applied to buying local biomass.

The power plant purchases its coal from Illinois and other states. Seville outlined two main benefits of the new biomass burning boiler:
• The biomass boiler will save on fuel costs, as well as lower the plant’s truck emissions, because the biomass would be collected from within a 70- to 75-mile radius of Columbia, as opposed to traveling outside the state for coal.
• Acquiring the biomass within mid-Missouri would help simulate the local economy.

The new boiler will use 100,000 tons of wood per year, Seville said. The woody biomass will consist of sawmill residue, urban wood waste and harvest residue from commercial timber harvests.

The wood for the biomass will come from forests that are being professionally managed and not clear-cutting operations, Stelzer said.

Stelzer said he hopes in the next five to 10 years for MU to produce some of its own wood for fuel with fast-growing hardwoods such as cottonwoods that are harvested every two to three years in short rotation.

“We need to be a leader that this can be done in a sustainable fashion,” said Stelzer, who said he believes doing so will be easier at the MU plant compared to other wood-burning power plants that are typically three times larger.
KANSAS CITY — Federal prosecutors charged five former University of Kansas employees Thursday with conspiring to steal more than $2 million in tickets to athletics events in a scandal that embarrassed the school and likely led to the early departure of athletic director Lew Perkins.

Prosecutors singled out former associate athletics director Charlene Blubaugh, who was in charge of the ticket office. They said she began stealing tickets in 2005 and gave them to other key athletics department employees to sell, either personally or through third parties.

Blubaugh, 43, of Medford, Okla., was charged along with her husband, Thomas Blubaugh, 46, who was a consultant to the ticket office.

Also charged were former assistant athletics director Rodney Jones, 42, of Lawrence, Kan.; former associate athletics director Ben Kirtland, 54, of Lenexa, Kan.; and Kassie Liebsch, 28, of Lawrence, who was a systems analyst working in the ticket office.

Two other former employees, Brandon Simmons and Jason Jeffries, have pleaded guilty to their roles in the scheme and are scheduled to be sentenced in federal court in March.

Investigators said the conspirators made between $3 million and $5 million in the scheme over five years.

Revelations of the ticket scam earlier this year angered many big-time donors who had been meeting exorbitant dollar demands for the privilege of buying premium tickets in always sold-out Allen Fieldhouse. Under an unpopular system imposed by Perkins to
raise money, seating was allocated on a points system based on how much a fan donated to the Williams Fund, the money-raising arm of the athletics department.

The best seats were supposed to go to the people who made the biggest donations. That alone caused resentment, especially among older followers who had occupied good seats for years and were unable to meet the new demands. Many wondered whether others had gotten good seats simply by purchasing tickets sold in the scam.

Perkins retired in September, a year earlier than previously planned. While never accused of having anything to do with the ticket scam, he nevertheless admitted he had been guilty of poor oversight and said it was the most embarrassing thing that had happened in his 40-year career.

A report conducted by a Wichita law firm and released in May said five Kansas athletics staffers and a consultant — none of whom still work for the university — sold or used at least 17,609 men's basketball tickets, 2,181 football tickets and a number of parking passes and other passes for personal purposes.

The report showed that more than $887,000 in basketball tickets and more than $122,000 worth of football tickets were involved.

"Being on the athletics side, the simplest way to try to describe this is that there was a curve ball thrown and I missed it," Perkins said in May. "I missed that curve ball. It got by. We had the wrong people hired for the wrong jobs."

The report found no wrongdoing in the points system and said the scheme's actual effect on tickets awarded was minimal.

The investigation began in March amid reports that tickets to Jayhawk basketball games — both at Allen Fieldhouse and in NCAA tournaments — were being scalped by officials within the athletics department.

The report suggested that Jones, former director of the Williams Fund who helped determine who got premium seats at Kansas home games, was a key player in the scandal. Kirtland, who was the school's associate athletics director of development, told investigators that Jones "was always on the lookout for development tickets."
The report blamed Kirtland for helping create "an atmosphere similar to a worker in a candy store" when it came to work with the tickets.

It also said Charlette Blubaugh, who was in charge of the ticket office and was the manager most familiar with the ticketing software, played a major role.

The indictment said the scheme included entering false information into a computer system designed to prevent tickets from being stolen, paying kickbacks to third parties not connected to the ticket office to sell tickets and concealing the receipt of outside income on reports required by the NCAA.

Jones' attorney, Gerald Handley, said he had not seen the indictment and had no comment. It was not immediately clear if the other four had attorneys.

Phone messages left for Perkins and Kirtland were not immediately returned. The Williams Fund directed questions to associate athletics director Jim Marchiony, who also didn't immediately return a call.

No phone number was listed for Thomas and Charlette Blubaugh, Jones or Liebsch.
What to do with a $2,000 windfall

It’s a lot to those who need it. But if it disappears quickly, it’s not too grand.
November 18, 2010 | By Heidi Stevens, Tribune Newspapers

With political candidates spending $1.5 million on losing campaigns and cable boviators debating whether billionaires pay enough taxes, it’s easy to lose sight of a sobering reality: The vast majority of Americans live paycheck to paycheck.

Which means an unexpected $2,000 — an employee bonus, an insurance rebate or a gift from grandma — can be a financial lifesaver.

But it can disappear quickly, especially if stashed into a checking account. We talked to a couple of financial experts about how best to spend a $2,000 windfall.

Start an emergency fund

If you don’t have an easily accessible emergency stash, this should be priority No. 1.

"If your car breaks down and you can’t get to work, money that lets you fix your car and get back to work is worth a heck of a lot more than $2,000," said Hall Kesmodel, personal financial planning expert at Hellowallet.com, an online money-management site. "First and foremost, you need liquidity."

A recent survey by the American Payroll Association found that about 72 percent of 31,650 respondents would find it somewhat or very difficult to meet their financial obligations if their paychecks were delayed for a week.

"The problem of liquidity is one that so many people have," Kesmodel said.

The equivalent of three- to six-months’ income is an ideal cushion, said Robert Weagley, chair of the University of Missouri’s Personal Financial Planning Department, whose research focuses on household investment. "Maybe more, as this recession keeps extending," he said.

But $2,000 is a good start. "You could have a medical situation, an emergency child-care expense; any emergency that you can’t solve unless you have a couple thousand dollars at your disposal," Kesmodel said.
Pay down debt

Next up? Tackle that credit card debt.

Boring? Maybe.

Smart? Definitely.

"Paying off debt is always a good return on your money," said Weagley, "particularly if you're paying credit card rates at 21 percent APR. A hole under that bucket gets closed."

But do that only after you've set up that emergency fund, Kesmodel said.

"If you take that $2,000 and pay down credit card debt," he said, "you're ultimately not in a position where you have any more financial security."

Save for retirement

If your employer offers a company match, alter your withholding so an extra $2,000 is sent to your 401(k) over the coming months.
UA narrows field of finalists to three in search for dean of business school

Becky Pallack Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Friday, November 19, 2010 12:00 am | Comments

Three men are finalists for the job of dean at the University of Arizona’s business school.

They are visiting campus to interview for the top job at the Eller College of Management. The school serves more than 5,500 students in Tucson and Scottsdale and hosts top-10-ranked programs in management information systems and entrepreneurship.

The selection will likely be made by the end of the year.

Paul Portney, dean since 2005, will step down in January to teach economics.

Vice dean and accounting professor Leslie Lidenburg will be the interim dean until the new hire starts in July.

The finalists are:

• Leonard Jessup, director of the Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at Washington State University's business school. He also chairs the department of entrepreneurship and information systems there.

Jessup has experience as dean and as president of the university's foundation. He also founded a venture-capital firm that helps universities commercialize emerging research and technology.

• Kenneth Evans, the dean and chair of business at the University of Oklahoma’s business school.

Evans has experience as an associate dean and acting dean at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and his background is in marketing.

• Lawrence Feick, the senior director of international programs at the University of Pittsburgh.

Feick has been on the business faculty there since 1982 and has experience as an associate dean and interim dean. His background is in marketing.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New Columbia buses may have eyes, tails and tiger stripes

By Eva Dou
November 18, 2010 | 2:09 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA -- It seems as though tailgaters won't be the only ones driving around with tiger tails.

The Columbia City Council is considering three new public bus designs that sport black-and-gold colors, as well as painted tiger eyes and striped tails. The designs were provided by MU.

Mayor Bob McDavid proposed at the Council meeting on Oct. 18 to color the buses black and gold in support of MU, an idea the council approved.

At Wabash Station on Thursday, riders had varied opinions about the three design options.

"The old buses were boring, but this is cool," said Tomomi Takase, a former MU exchange student from Japan who was back in town to visit friends. "All the students will love it."

Jerome Farmer, who recently moved to Columbia from Charleston, was more concerned about the practical aspects.

"I prefer Option C because it's easier to see the front and back of the bus if they're yellow than if they're white and black" like Options A and B, Farmer said. "But black and gold buses make sense because it's a college town."

Others were less impressed.
"Leave it like it is," said Barbara Brown, who takes the bus most days to her job at the Central Missouri Food Pantry. "They just changed the routes on us, and we're already used to the color."

The city has ordered six new buses with a $2 million federal grant, which are due to arrive in 2012. They will sport the new design, along with any other future buses, Public Works Department spokeswoman Jill Stedem said.

Repainting the city's entire bus fleet in black and gold would cost around $600,000 — too much, Third Ward Councilman Gary Kespoli said. Instead, the city will replace its blue and red buses as they wear out with the tiger-themed ones.

The Transportation Advisory Commission will consider the three designs at its meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Walton Building and bring its recommendation to the City Council.