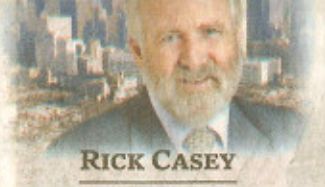


City may plot new course for park



RICK CASEY

What Casey's jury will hear

IF a jury is seated May 15, as scheduled, to decide whether 10-year-old Casey Harmeier committed the crime of attempting to send a false fire alarm, here is some of the evidence jurors are likely to hear.

- Casey is a good student, making A's and B's.
 - According to his father, he has never been in trouble, either at Tomball ISD's Beckendorf Intermediate School or previously at Tomball Elementary School.
- When I asked district spokesman Stacy Stanfield to confirm that, she said, "Student records are confidential. I am told he is a good student."

Teacher: 'He's a great kid'

- He was called to the principal's office last year — to receive the "citizen-of-the-month award."
- When Casey was sentenced to three weeks at the district's alternative school for actually activating the fire alarm, alternative school teacher Janet Bohannon e-mailed his fifth-grade classroom teachers asking if there was anything she needed to know in order to help him



STEVE CAMPBELL: CHRONICLE

A HIT: Eddie Ante blasts out of a sand trap at Gus Wortham Park on Tuesday. "Howard Hughes used to golf here," he says. "It has a lot of history and . . . it should remain a golf course."

STATE OF THE STATE

Reaction to Perry message is mixed

■ But both parties greet proposals on education and health insurance

Officials kick around plan to remake Wortham into Dynamo soccer complex

By **LORI RODRIGUEZ** and **MATT STILES**
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Shouts of "goal!" could replace "fore!" at the venerable Gus Wortham golf course under a plan to provide a permanent home for the Dynamo soccer team and keep it in Houston.

City officials quietly have been looking into converting the old East End course into a soccer-oriented youth facility, which the Dynamo is requesting along with its own stadium as a condition for staying.

Several suburban cities also are kicking around proposals to land the championship soccer team. That's putting pressure on Houston to make a move.

The proposed sports complex, however, would mean the end of existing operations at Gus Wortham Park, which is in a heavily Hispanic community and is one of only four golf courses inside the Loop.

So some community leaders and residents of surrounding neighborhoods want to nix the plan.

Councilwoman Carol Alvarado, who represents the area,

GUS WORTHAM PARK

City officials are considering a plan to replace Houston's oldest city-run golf course with a youth-sports complex, and the idea already is drawing some criticism. A recent study analyzed the course:

- **Opened:** 1914
- **Strengths:** Ideal, inner-Loop location, historical charm, strong design and layout
- **Weaknesses:** Poor physical condition, play has fallen significantly since late 1990s, needs up to \$6 million in renovations

Source: National Golf Foundation study of city golf operations

said the city should renovate the course, as the National Golf Foundation recommended in 2005, not abandon it.

"Lately, we've prided ourselves so much on historical preservation," Alvarado said. Please see **WORTHAM**, Page B7

WORTHAM: Dynamo in talks with 4 cities

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

"The golf course itself is a piece of the East End's history, and I don't want to see that destroyed."

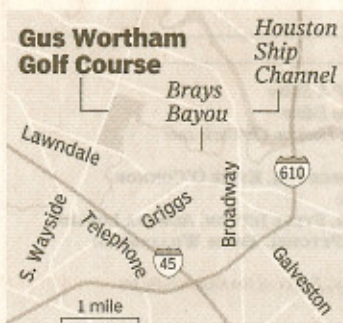
The Wortham course and the ones at Memorial and Hermann parks are owned by the city; the fourth inner-city course is the private River Oaks Country Club.

Andy Icken, planning and development director with the city's Public Works and Engineering Department, said the city's goal is to present a package to the Dynamo within a month in hopes of keeping the team from moving to the suburbs.

"We have been investigating a broad range of opportunities," said Icken, who has briefed Mayor Bill White on the effort. "We haven't really put pen to paper yet, as far as the economics and how we would pay for all this."

Icken said plans for the 150-acre site could include a practice complex for the Dynamo as well as public soccer and baseball fields.

A new downtown stadium could be linked to the site by a planned expansion of the Metropolitan Transit Authority's rapid transit system into the East End.



ROBERT DIBRELL : CHRONICLE

"The Dynamo have told us from the beginning that part of their program is to involve youth in soccer-related, sports-related activity," he said.

Dynamo President Oliver Luck said the team is having "in-depth conversations" with officials in Houston, Sugar Land, Webster and Pearland. The team wants to make a decision on the location of its new stadium by April or May.

"But we're not at a point where we're near any decisions," Luck said.

The Dynamo won the Major League Soccer championship last year in its first season in Houston after moving from San Jose, Calif., in 2005. It plays its home games at the University of Houston's Robertson Stadium, which seats 32,000.

The Anschutz Entertain-

ment Group, which owns the team, has a lease to continue playing at Robertson through 2008. Its average home attendance this past season was 18,935 per game.

Team officials repeatedly have said the Dynamo must develop a stadium for the operation to be economically viable in the long-term through concessions, suites and other stadium-based revenue sources.

Icken said it's too early to discuss how the city, perhaps in conjunction with the team, would finance a soccer stadium. Possible funding sources include city sales tax revenue, private donations and money from the team itself.

"Where we are is, can the city come up with a package of options that compete well with those other places?" Icken said. "I can't answer that question yet."

But he said the team's talks with Houston's suburban neighbors have added urgency to the planning.

"I don't think we can procrastinate," he said.

Paul Mabry, communications director for Harris County Commissioner Sylvia Garcia, said the commissioner is staying informed on the proposal but that the city is driving it.

Gus Wortham Park is in the district Garcia represents.

So far, the plan has not been debated at the grass roots. But longtime golfers at the East End facility Tuesday were less than thrilled.

"I come here with my friends every day to golf. A lot of young people come out here to practice or for tournaments. Some community folks come to exercise, have a hamburger or just enjoy the fresh air," said Eddie Ante, a semi-retired, steamship company owner.

"Howard Hughes used to golf here. It's in the inner city, it has a lot of history and it's utilized a lot. It should remain a golf course.

"If the city is going to do anything to this place, it needs to invest a lot more money into modernizing it."

Joe Turner, the city's parks and recreation director, stressed that the city would consult golfers and the surrounding residents before making any changes.

Annual rounds at the course have declined more than 40 percent since 1998, according to parks department statistics, but have stabilized recently.

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LINES: Metro hopes to start work by early summer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

support," he said.

FTA Administrator James

Wilson said federal officials determined in December that the intermodal terminal will not

STARTING POINT

Favorable news about federal

18 and over 64 years of age — indicators of transit-dependent populations."