

MAGIC NUMBER**5**SOX COVERAGE AND
MORE MLB IN SPORTS,
STARTING ON B1★ **IT'S COLONIAL STRAW POLL TIME** ★Popular area ice cream eatery
continues a 44-year tradition with a
cool choice of Ba-racky Road or
McCandy Cain sundaes, **GO, C1****Out in the cold**Moratorium on new hotels in
Aurora goes through, leaving
local businessman shut out,
Our Towns, A3**TODAY'S WEATHER BY:**KELLY KNAUF
CROSS LUTHERAN
SCHOOL, AURORA
HIGH 80, LOW 59

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**The Aurora
Beacon News**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

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Shooting for the stars at Sci-TechPlans announced
for addition of
planetarium in
downtown AuroraBy **Andre Salles**
ASALLES@SCN1.COM

AURORA — David Alexander calls it an "of course."

"You look at the project, and you simply say, 'Of course,'" Sci-Tech's deputy director said with a grin Wednesday night.

He's talking about an idea he and the staff of

the hands-on science museum on Benton Street have been talking about for more than a year now.

On Thursday, they made it official, announcing plans for the John C. Dunham Planetarium, a 135-seat theater they hope to build just to the south of Sci-Tech, overlooking the Fox River.

❖ Turn to **PLANETARIUM, A2**IMAGE COURTESY CORDOGAN, CLARK AND ASSOCIATES
Architectural drawing of the planned John C. Dunham Planetarium.**PLANETARIUM**

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The 5,000-square-foot planetarium would have its own entrance, but also be accessible through the museum. It would have state-of-the-art projection technology and sound systems to rival the best planetariums in the country. And it would be the second-largest in the state, behind the Adler Planetarium in Chicago.

It will be named after the late Dunham, an Aurora businessman and philanthropist who established the Dunham Fund charity in 1996 to support worthy causes.

As you might expect, Alexander and Director Shawn Carlson are excited about the prospect. Carlson said it would add a world-class attraction to the not-for-profit museum, one that would allow them to educate thousands more children each year.

Only one question remains — how to pay for it. Alexander estimated the cost at around \$5 million, which breaks down to \$3 million for the building and \$2 million as an endowment, to keep the planetarium running during economic tough times.

And they're counting on donations to make that happen.

Sci-Tech has already been awarded a challenge grant from the Dunham Fund for

\$750,000, which they must match to receive. Carlson said they hope to land \$500,000 from the city of Aurora, with ward fund grants making up a portion of that. And the rest, he said, will hopefully come from companies, foundations and the community.

Aurora Mayor Tom Weisner was on hand to show his support for the project, calling it a "great thing." But he said the \$500,000 figure is "a goal" of Sci-Tech's, and that he "cannot look in a crystal ball" and see whether they would get it.

Carlson said he hopes to have fundraising completed within two years and construction rolling shortly after that. The museum has already received donations from area businesses, he said, and local firm Cordogan, Clark and Associates has completed concept drawings for the planetarium.

But mostly, Thursday night's celebration was about excitement. Carlson breathlessly pitched the idea to the receptive crowd, discussing the features of the proposed planetarium in detail, and received frequent applause.

And at the end of the list, he laughed, saying, "If that's not going to get kids excited about science, then science just isn't their thing."

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