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David Beckham Seeks Assist From Miami Schools for MLS Soccer Stadium.

Trying to close a stadium deal with local governments, David Beckham this week greeted the man who would be his landlord: Miami-Dade School Superintendent Alberto Carvalho.

The Wednesday meeting was at Miami Beach's SoHo Beach House, the luxe hotel and private club that is Beckham's regular base of operations during visits to the Miami area.

"We spent a lot of time talking about kids," Carvalho said Thursday night. "I came away feeling very comfortable about the decency of this guy."

The unannounced meeting was one stop on Beckham's Miami swing, which included filming part of a soccer documentary for UNICEF and a nighttime visit with the University of Miami women's soccer team. Beckham, a global fashion icon, was photographed wearing an orange T-Shirt emblazoned with "The U" in photos posted on Twitter from the encounter.

Beckham's appearances come as his two-year stadium quest has never been closer to a final deal, but also as his negotiators warn it could still fall apart over real estate prices.

The plan is for his investment group to pay for a \$200 million stadium to rise next to Marlins Park on a mix of privately-owned land and parcels currently owned by the city of Miami. Beckham's group has agreed to pay Miami for the real estate, while negotiating separate deals with the private owners.

The stadium and site would be transferred to the school system in order to shield it from property taxes, and in exchange Beckham's group would provide free space for large school events and some form of sports-related education for visiting classes and students. The Beckham group would also sponsor some school activities, including buying band uniforms and supplies.

Carvalho said Beckham's people contacted him early in the week about a meeting.

The sit down marks something of a do-over for the Beckham group, which failed to invite school officials to a VIP reception with the soccer star in early 2014. The who's-who event launched Beckham's extended pursuit of a stadium site, and the stream of party pics of politicians and business leaders posing with the soccer celebrity came to represent the limits of star power to overcome political complications and commercial interests in Miami.

Carvalho said no photos were taken at his afternoon meeting with Beckham. "When I met Mr. Beckham, I was clear in telling him that I've seen how he comes to town, and everybody wants a Beckham kiss and a hug and a Beckham selfie. I said I'll take a Beckham handshake. He laughed."

A Beckham representative confirmed the meeting, but declined to provide other details. Carvalho said the 45-minute conversation mostly involved the two outlining their visions for the stadium: Carvalho on what it could do for the local school system, and Beckham on why he wants to bring

Major League Soccer to Miami.

“He told me this is the one place in the world where he wants to have his name associated with a soccer team,” Carvalho said.

Carvalho had initially sought a magnet school within the stadium itself, but that provision has been publicly rejected by Beckham’s local negotiators. Carvalho said the alternative is a large amount of “educational” space within the stadium. Carvalho said the total benefits to schools would top \$1 million, roughly equal to what the stadium would pay to the school board if subject to property taxes. Beckham’s group also agreed to continue paying the same amount of property taxes the current land owners pay to local governments.

Insiders say the bulk of the deal with Carvalho is done, and that approval by the elected school board is considered a certainty. But people involved in the talks say there is significant concern that negotiations with the site’s private land owners could fail as the would-be sellers demand higher prices than the Beckham group is willing to pay.

After resisting a stadium next to Marlins Park since early 2014, Beckham partner Marcelo Claure and Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado summoned reporters to City Hall in July to announce the site next to the baseball park had become the top choice for soccer.

That’s left Beckham’s real estate team to negotiate sales prices for land targeted for a stadium deal that’s attracting global attention.

Even if the landowners come to terms with Beckham, another hurdle remains: a referendum in the city of Miami. It would be held March 15, the same day as the presidential primary.

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By Douglas Hanks

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