

Stadium in Armstrong County

by
Raymond E. Muth

Valley News Dispatch 5/04/97 - Community Columnist

It has been widely reported that legislation that would authorize a referendum on a 10-county regional sales tax to finance among other things, new baseball and football stadiums is likely to be introduced within two weeks. The 10 counties include Armstrong and Westmoreland County. Counties would have the option to opt in or out.

Maybe the proposal has a chance of passing in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties. But does anyone honestly think that hard-working folks barely making it in Armstrong County will pass a referendum that appears to benefit Pittsburgh? No way. It won't get 3 votes. That's why this referendum should include a clause allowing each of the 10 counties a real opportunity to propose a site in their county for new stadiums. The regional interest generated would be enormous and it would be the referendum's only plausible chance.

Everyone seems to be stuck on a myth that a new stadium has to be constructed in the downtown area. Many want to duplicate what has been done in Cleveland and Baltimore. Having our sports teams play close to the downtown would be great but are we ignoring some better possibilities? Look at the phenomenal popularity of the Coca-Cola Star Lake Ampitheater in Washington County. No one can argue its success despite being outside of downtown Pittsburgh. The plus for the owners is that they pay no amusement tax. The drawback is that the location may be distant for some of us but it's no worse than the time lost fighting the current accessibility problems to downtown Pittsburgh.

Most big-city downtowns are becoming less and less traditional job centers. This is certainly true in Pittsburgh. The many successful industrial parks in Monroeville and Westmoreland County are evidence of this trend. The advent of the Internet is giving birth to home businesses in quiet, small towns with low crime. The popularity of small towns outside of Pittsburgh will sky-rocket in the years ahead. While there may be merit in turning downtown areas into entertainment centers, is it really critical to our region to put any new sports facility downtown or on the North shore? If this is really a regional issue, shouldn't the entire region be fair game for a new stadium?

There has been a lot of good work done by corporate leaders but Pittsburgh City Council and the Allegheny County Commissioners will never agree on a site let alone the public funding formula. It simply is not a political possibility. Mr. McClatchey and Mr. Rooney would be wise to recognize this and look outside of Pittsburgh. But most important, they need to show the public what they are willing to spend before the referendum appears. They should also allow an independent accountant to make public what the projected profits and losses would be for varying attendance levels since this is indeed a partnership.

Washington County Commissioner Irely was scoffed at by many for proposing free ground to the Pirates if they built a stadium in Washington County. But perhaps Commissioner Irely had the foresight to know that the Pirates would never have a new stadium in Pittsburgh let alone Allegheny County.

If each county were to have an opportunity to make a proposal, Delmont in Westmoreland County would have to be a very attractive candidate. Highway access is better than the Star Line Amphitheater and it's regionally located.

But if it's 150 acres of riverfront property with good access that everyone is looking for there is plenty of property with good access from route 28 between Freeport and Kittanning in Armstrong County. Why shouldn't Armstrong County be allowed to genuinely participate in this regional issue?

Instead of everyone talking about better ways to get into Pittsburgh or from Pittsburgh to the airport, I think we should be talking about ways to connect the proposed Kiski Valley Expressway to a real beltway through Cranberry to the airport. That's where both the jobs and the population are moving.

Maybe a stadium in Armstrong County has a snowball's chance in hell but why slam the door on our region by telling folks outside of Pittsburgh, "we are only interested in you when we want your money."



[E-Mail Ray](#)

[Home](#) | [About Me](#) | [Family](#) | [Critters](#) | [Work](#) | [Articles](#) | [Archives](#)