

THE MEYER SPORTS WIRE



D-Day for Prop C and a new Chargers stadium

by Dave Meyer

The Charger Stadium issue is finally before the voters. For the estimated 8,800 North San Diego County Charger season ticket holders and thousands of local fans, there is nothing to do except wait since only San Diego city voters get to vote.

Measure C, if approved, would allow the creation of a joint use stadium/convention center facility in downtown San Diego. A yes vote increases the hotel room tax to 16.5%, up from 12.5%. The \$1.8 billion estimated proceeds help fund a proposed downtown stadium-convention facility, with \$650 million from the Chargers and NFL.

Because Measure C requires a 2/3 vote and it faces opposition from hoteliers and taxpayer groups, it's a long shot. The Chargers have tried to convince voters that the stadium will be paid for entirely by visitors and not local taxpayers.

In my opinion, most non-sports fan voters will see only a vote to approve a tax. That would mean a No vote, even



though the citizens of San Diego would not feel any tax increase.

A second initiative, Measure D (the "Briggs Initiative") is not backed by the Chargers. Measure D also raises hotel room taxes, but bans the use of public funds for the stadium. Measure D forbids a stadium on the waterfront.

If Measure C fails, the Chargers have no apparent San Diego Plan B except to play indefinitely at Qualcomm Stadium, considered one of the worst stadiums in the league along with the Oakland Coliseum.

The Chargers would have until January 15, 2017 to exercise their option to move to Inglewood

with the Rams. If they don't, the Raiders could join the Rams although I suspect The Raiders' first choice is to play in a new stadium in a city by themselves. The Raiders have made great progress in Las Vegas, and the NFL doesn't seem to want two L.A. teams.

The process gives me flashbacks to the early 1990's, when I represented the Oakland Coliseum. I spent approximately 5½ years on the project that brought the Raiders back to Oakland from Los Angeles. The big difference in Oakland was that all parties worked together to bring the Raiders back. The City, County, Coliseum and Raiders worked together despite very bad history (the Raiders left Oakland for L.A. in 1982).

The Chargers have been hoping for a new stadium for 15 years yet have been unable to get the City and the business community to support

their efforts. The hoteliers oppose Prop C. Mayor Kevin Faulconer finally supported Measure C after receiving a letter with concessions from the Chargers that is likely nonbinding.

My ideal outcome: Measure C fails, but receives close to 50% of the vote, and the Raiders move to Las Vegas. The Chargers then get serious and work with the City and local businesses to achieve a deal in San Diego that truly benefits all sides. If the Chargers want a solution like Petco Park, pick an exact stadium location, get the City and business leaders to the table with the Chargers and identify and overcome the hurdles to make a new state of the art facility a reality.

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