

Commission Punts on Land Grab

Written by Jack King, BT Contributor
August 2018 - Last Updated August 2018



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h, yes, as we get closer to the August break in all things political, stuff begins to happen at warp speed. At the city commission level, votes are taken with little or no discussion, and our commissioners head for the doors like scalded dogs.

The bad thing is, they vote badly. The good thing? They won't be able to vote again on anything until the first week in September. And that's all right. They've already done enough damage for the year. And maybe longer.

For those of you living under a rock, the Miami City Commission voted to put the proposed new

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soccer stadium, planned to be built on top of the publicly owned Melreese golf course, along with tons of retail, office, and hotel space, on the fall ballot.

The issue goes to the voters November 6. And that brings up another question. Why'd the city commission refer this issue to us? Didn't we elect them to run the city for us? Is this a duck-and-cover move to protect their political rear ends?

And why did we elect you guys, especially Commissioner Ken Russell, if you just pass the ball back to us and then go on vacation? What good are you? Why do we the people even need you?

The leader of the commissioners in favor of the stadium/retail mall is none other than Commissioner Joe Carollo. Joe never ducks for cover. He just asks the developers for a bigger check, right, Joe? Hey, Joe, did the check clear? I'm sure it did because the Beckham/Mas group has plenty of money, and they know how to spread it around.

Miami has a miserable history with its sports franchises and the facilities they play in, possibly with the exception of the Miami Dolphins, who played in the Orange Bowl for 22 years. When Joe Robbie bought the team, he wanted a new stadium and couldn't come to terms with the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County, so he did what any self-respecting millionaire would do. He built his own stadium on his own land. That was the last time in the history of Miami that happened. Nor will it happen again any time soon, as long as the sucker politicians with our money will build facilities for them. And it hasn't happened.

The Miami Heat's first home was built considerably smaller than most arenas in the NBA, primarily because the owners didn't want lots of empty seats showing on television. However, when the Heat started winning, they wanted a new arena, much larger and -- get this -- right on Biscayne Bay and on public land. They got it all, thanks to mindless politicians playing with our money, who would do anything the owners of the Heat wanted.

And then along comes baseball. Remember the pitch that we got from the Marlins' owners? Baseball will be popular here because of the large number of Cubans! "They love beisbol!" And once again, we got suckered by the politicians who saw a way to make money.

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They decided we didn't need the Orange Bowl stadium anymore, so the city tore it down and built a baseball stadium on the site for the Marlins, who'd been playing at Joe Robbie Stadium -- and just *had* to have their own ballpark.

The Marlins won a couple of World Series championships and then sold all the star players who'd actually won the series. After that fiasco, the Marlins were so bad, nobody came to the games. The owners didn't care. They were making money, and that's what it's all about.

The last time I to the Marlins' stadium it wasn't to watch a ballgame. There is a brew pub there, but not in the stadium. It's in one of the parking garages, and I think there were more people in the brew pub than at the stadium. Oh yeah, the parking garage was pretty much empty.

And the really bad thing is that while the financing for the Marlins' stadium spreads out over 40 years, it is backloaded, meaning most of the money is to be paid back in the last few years of the deal. Total cost after all the bonds have been paid off: \$2.5 *billion*.

Tell your kids to leave town by 2035. It won't be pretty. But then again, this is Miami. We, or our kids, will find a way.

As I sit here, hoping Miami will figure out how to land an MLS soccer team without making us poor people pay for it, I'm looking at a piece in the *Miami Herald*, written by Michelle Kaufman. It extols the virtues of soccer, especially professional soccer.

Soccer in itself is one of the greatest sports -- one ball and a field. But if you want my vote, support soccer at the kids' level.

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