

# ***POLICY BRIEF***

An electronic publication of  
The Allegheny Institute for Public Policy

---

November 15, 2001

Volume 1, Number 39

---

## **Pittsburgh's Stadium Saga: More Byzantine Than Ever**

Most people would argue that good government should be as transparent and open as possible. Of course, the reality is that most governments are far from transparent. Unfortunately, in Pittsburgh opaqueness and misdirection has been elevated to an art form. Examples abound. Foremost perhaps is the convoluted and contorted process of getting from the mayoral promise of a new ballpark for the Pirates to the financing and construction of two new stadiums and the demolition of a barely 30 year old stadium. Many of us will recall the attempted stealth legislation, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's record speed in disposing of lawsuits against using RAD revenues, and the dark--of-- night, carefully orchestrated changes in the state law governing the awarding of contracts for state funded projects.

But just when you think it can't get any more bizarre, along comes a new twist. Remember the Pittsburgh Stadium Authority that was supposed to go out of existence once Three Rivers was demolished? In light of the fact that the Sports and Exhibition Authority (formerly the Pittsburgh Auditorium) had taken over the construction and ownership of the new stadiums, why would a Stadium Authority be needed? Yet, here we are nine months after the disappearance of Three Rivers and the Stadium Authority is still very much with us. And, we also learn that the Authority continues to own land on the North Shore and is a principal player in any potential development of the property between the stadiums.

The obvious question is why this happened. It is hard to see any reason other than a desire to maintain City control of the North Shore property. The Sports and Exhibition Authority(SEA) has three County appointees, three City appointees and a seventh member who is a joint appointee. Thus it could happen that non-City appointees could end up as the majority. On the other hand, the Stadium Authority is appointed exclusively by the City. It would appear that concerns in some quarters that the SEA Board might not be pliable enough with respect to City wishes produced a change of heart about letting the old Stadium Authority go out of existence.

As late as October 25, the City's website still carried the statement that "The Authority's existence and function will conclude with the planned demolition of Three Rivers

Stadium.” Obviously, that was written prior to February 2001. It serves as a reminder to keep websites updated.

Surely, it had been a longstanding plan to transfer any land ownership to the Sports and Exhibition Authority who would then have clear, unambiguous control and responsibility to see that development proceeds in a speedy and satisfactory manner. Now there is another player with its own Board and possibly a different agenda. It is fascinating to ponder where this new twist in the never ending saga of sports facilities in Pittsburgh will lead. How do we explain having a Stadium Authority which neither owns or manages stadiums?

Perhaps the executive director could spell it all out in plain and forthright language for the taxpayers who are footing most of the bill for the projects. It is not too late to clear up some of the murkiness that characterizes the whole endeavor.

---

**Jake Haulk, Ph.D. President**

**Eric Montarti, Policy Analyst**

---

*Policy Briefs may be reprinted as long as proper attribution is given.*

Allegheny Institute for Public Policy  
835 Western Avenue\* Suite 300\* Pittsburgh PA 15233  
Phone (412) 231-6020 \* Fax (412) 231-6037  
E-mail: [aipp@alleghenyinstitute.org](mailto:aipp@alleghenyinstitute.org)