

December 7–14, 2000

HALL MONITOR

Deal Clinchers

City Council is scheduled to vote on a stadium-financing package Dec. 14, but it is widely assumed the legislation is a done deal. Everyone has been talking about it in the past tense for weeks.

Regardless of an unresolved \$54 million funding gap, Mayor Street has believed his plan to build a baseball and football stadium in South Philly would pass from the day he initially announced it.

"This can happen," Street commented just as council hearings were getting underway last Thursday, Nov. 30. "It's going to happen."

You can't really blame the mayor for acting cocky. At least nine members of council, the magic number needed to pass legislation, have planned to vote for the bill all along. It is possible, however, to point to a few specific provisions that helped clinch the deal for individual members.

Council members like James Kenney and Frank Rizzo have supported the concept of new stadiums from the start, but insisted they wouldn't rubber stamp any deal before scrutinizing the financing. Mayor Street is talking up a new car rental tax and increased attendance at the games to offset the city's contribution of \$394 million for both baseball and football stadiums. Even though it is a major stretch to predict the city will come out ahead financially, council members are at least pretending to buy into the mayor's spiel.

New stadiums for the Philadelphia Eagles and Phillies will carry a total price tag of just over \$1 billion.

While the cost to the city is certainly more than ballpark peanuts, it could have been worse when compared to agreements made in other cities.

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Taxpayers in Cincinnati, for instance, are footing 91 percent of the \$334 million bill for a new park for the Reds. And the Denver Broncos will soon be kicking off in a \$400 million stadium, more than three-quarters of which will come from the public trough.

Other council members gave their blessing to stadium legislation after the Phillies and Eagles agreed to pay \$22.5 million to create a **Sports Complex Special Services District**. This piece was important when it came to winning over Council President Anna Verna and Frank DiCicco, both of whom represent South Philly districts.

Support from freshman lawmaker Blondell Reynolds-Brown is a shoo-in since the stadium agreements will create a Children's Fund — thanks to her insistence. Every San Francisco 49ers football ticket includes a 50-cent surcharge to fund sports in schools, but no other city has wrangled a deal requiring the teams themselves to chip in. Here, the Phillies and Eagles will contribute \$60 million to the fund over a 30-year period.

Several members of council are more likely to rubber stamp the stadium project since the teams agreed on a minority business program. Council members Angel Ortiz, Wilson Goode, Jr. and Donna Reed Miller, in particular, had insisted such a provision be included to garner their support.

The minority participation goals for the project are designed to hand 35 percent of contracts to minority-owned businesses, 12 percent to women-owned businesses, and 2 percent for disabled-owned businesses.

—[Gwen Shaffer](#)

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