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## Wise politicians will bury hatchet after Real brouhaha

**By Frank Pignanelli & LaVarr Webb**

"Politics is the entertainment branch of industry," the famous guitarist and satirist Frank Zappa observed. This summer has not delivered enough movies to quench our entertainment thirst (well, actually Webb never goes to movies), but the antics surrounding the proposed soccer stadium have certainly filled the void. We offer different perspectives - one from the inside and the other from the outside - on this seemingly endless controversy.

**Pignanelli:** I have concerns with a publicly funded soccer stadium — even in Salt Lake City — because the funding mechanics do not benefit taxpayers. During the recent legislative session, our firm was hired to protect a client against potential harm from the stadium. (We reached a compromise with Real.)

With that out of the way, let's review the personalities that are providing the summer fun:

Real owner **Dave Checketts** accused **Larry Miller** of lobbying against the soccer stadium during the legislative session. My partner and I can state firsthand that we tried everything short of kidnapping to force a statement of opposition from this prominent business leader, and he refused. Indeed, some legislators believed that Miller's silence was evidence of a "deal" with Real (certainly not the case). Although amusing to observe, Checketts' slew of insults against elected officials will haunt him in future endeavors.

Sandy Mayor **Tom Dolan** has won the title of "Utahn with the Most Chutzpah" for his diatribe against the County Council for their "anti-Sandy" actions. This incredible accusation is from the man who, for the last 12 years, utilized his formidable political and dealmaking skills to build a political pipeline to transport financial resources from the County Complex to the Sandy City Hall.

Mayor **Peter Corroon**, after expressing his concerns, is enjoying affection from a populace weary of their county government. However, powerful politicians are angry with Corroon for alleged backtracking on commitments made to stadium

supporters during the legislative session and not providing a prior warning of his reversal.

Salt Lake County Councilmember **Mark Crockett**, along with his colleagues **Jim Bradley** and **Jenny Wilson**, never wavered from vocal opposition, thereby attracting approval from conservatives and populists. A "Profile of Courage" goes to **Marv Hendrickson**, who represents much of Sandy and yet voted against the stadium. The opposition by Hendrickson, a respected contractor and developer, is evidence the project was deeply flawed. Councilman **Joe Hatch** supported the proposal against the wishes of many constituents. Apparently, Hatch was pursuing a comprehensive deal that included Salt Lake City (funding the expanded arts complex) and maintained his commitment to Real.

Mayor **Rocky Anderson**, to the point of nausea, continually refers to the book "The Rise of the Creative Class" as a model for restoring decaying cities. Although author **Richard Florida** decries stadiums as destructive to reviving municipalities, Anderson cannot contain his lust for a big trophy — a soccer stadium at the Utah State Fairpark.

The role of the Utah Taxpayers Association cannot be ignored. The tax watchdog group (led by **Howard Stephenson** and **Mike Jerman**) whispered in appropriate ears if the county approved the stadium, they would pursue a public referendum (polls showed that they could win — stopping the stadium).

Capitol Hill maintenance workers are still finding blood and body parts lost by lawmakers when House Speaker **Greg Curtis** "coaxed" them to support legislation allowing the stadium. Politicos are wondering if he will extract any retribution for his hard work that was eventually mooted by the county. Because of Curtis's tremendous political talents and personal investment in this matter, he may ultimately control the outcome of soccer in Utah.

**Webb:** I've simply watched the stadium brouhaha from afar, and I don't have any great insights or any clue how it will end. It's a classic case of clashing political interests involving powerful players. These fights are not for the faint-of-heart.

I'm hopeful the pro soccer team can stay in Utah with an appropriate level of public support (a suitable standard was established with the Delta Center).

Any high-profile business that solicits public funding gets caught up in the enormously messy and unpredictable political process, with accompanying competing agendas, intrigue and media scrutiny.

**Greg Curtis** and **Tom Dolan** are two political heavyweights who aren't used to losing. But even the best politicians don't win every battle. It's said that politics is

a lot more like baseball than football. Even the World Series champion loses dozens of games along the way.

Hopefully, tempers will be curbed and thoughts of revenge will be put aside. Some of the harsh criticism that has been heard isn't just rude, it's dumb politics. One of the oldest lessons in politics is to avoid burning bridges. That's because today's adversary will mostly likely be tomorrow's ally — but not if personal animosity exists.

Politics has constantly changing sets of alliances and coalitions on a wide variety of issues and topics. Anyone who wants any staying power in politics needs to learn to debate the issues on their merits, not take defeat personally and always stay respectful and gracious.

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