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The Clutch Hitters of Tampa Bay Baseball Stadium Issue Position Statement

The Clutch Hitters of Tampa Bay is a group of influential local business leaders whose mission and purpose is to ensure the long-term viability and preservation of the Tampa Bay Rays as a regional asset.

We firmly believe that the Rays and Major League Baseball are important contributors to our region's quality of life and to the regional identity of the Tampa Bay community. In fact, just last year Tampa Bay area baseball fans collectively watched more than 100 million hours of Rays baseball. The presence of Major League baseball is also a critical regional economic asset that must be fully supported and retained for the benefit of the entire region.

This community asset is at risk. The Rays have announced that they will not renew their current use agreement at Tropicana Field in 2027. Built in 1988, Tropicana Field is now the only fixed dome stadium in use throughout Major League Baseball. It is nearing the end of its useful life. A new baseball stadium must be built.

The Clutch Hitters believe that Tampa Bay business community, public officials and the Rays must engage in a collaborative effort to find the right solution for the region.

Economic Benefits and Studies:

The Rays are an economic engine for local businesses. The Rays create a valuable audience at live games and through radio and TV broadcasts. This audience drives millions of dollars in business to local companies who are able to reach that audience of potential customers through sponsorships and advertising with the Rays.

Data-driven studies conducted by the ABC Taskforce and other local groups indicate that a stadium built in other locations within the Tampa Bay region will generate higher game attendance and corporate support.

The Bay Area Stadium Financing Caucus, a collaborative effort of the St. Petersburg and the Greater Tampa chambers of commerce estimated a stadium cost of \$500 million (including a \$100 million retractable roof) in their comprehensive report. The report also concluded that St. Petersburg/Pinellas County and Tampa/Hillsborough County could fund a portion of the stadium without imposing new taxes on their residents and that the Rays would have to cover a substantial portion of the costs as well. However,

the region must address the issue now as decisions concerning some of the potential public funding sources must be made within the next two years.

The City of St. Petersburg:

We recognize that St. Petersburg and Pinellas County fought long and hard to bring Major League Baseball to the City and to the Tampa Bay community. Over the past 15 years the city accomplished what it set out to do; successfully spawn the development of St. Petersburg and the waterfront.

We also recognize that the attendance numbers can not be disputed or explained away. Consistent low attendance when compared to other teams in similar sized markets since 1999 requires that the Rays look for alternative stadium location and construct a new facility in the Tampa Bay region. This process must begin now in order to sustain the economics of fielding a competitive team year in and year out.

With that in mind and given the Rays stated position on Tropicana Field, the value of the current lease and the City of St, Petersburg's negotiating leverage lessens with each passing day.

Call to action:

Acknowledging that all stakeholders must be recognized and accommodated, the Clutch Hitters recommend, support and encourage the following next steps in addressing this critical business retention and quality of life issue:

1. The Rays and the city of St. Petersburg must begin meaningful, two-way discussions to find a win-win solution to this stalemate.
2. In exchange for mutually agreed upon compensation to the City of St. Petersburg, the Rays should be permitted to fully explore all of their options for a new stadium site in the Tampa Bay region as soon as possible.
3. The 85 acres of property that currently holds Tropicana Field may be more valuable to the city of St. Petersburg if it were redeveloped. Options for redevelopment that will benefit the city should be aggressively explored and considered. A formal process should begin immediately to fully assess the highest and best use of the Tropicana Field site and potential for future economic development immediately following the Rays departure from the facility, whenever that occurs.
4. The Tampa Bay Partnership should convene a broad coalition of business leaders to lend support to the Rays and all stakeholders in the region throughout the process of finding the right solution.

By acting collaboratively and in the best interest of the residents and business community of the Tampa Bay region, the Clutch Hitters believe that a solution can be found to this stadium issue that will benefit all stakeholders and retain the Rays and Major League baseball for years to come.

About The Clutch Hitters of Tampa Bay

The Clutch Hitters of Tampa Bay is an organized group of business and community leaders founded in September of 2008. Members of the group share a common interest in baseball, in the Tampa Bay Rays and in the continued presence of Major League Baseball in the Tampa Bay area.

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