



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**CLUTCH HITTERS URGE ST. PETERSBURG CITY COUNCIL TO RATIFY STADIUM AGREEMENT**

The Clutch Hitters of Tampa Bay support City Council ratification of the *Memorandum of Understanding* announced yesterday morning by St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman and Tampa Bay Rays President Brian Auld.

“The City and Rays have conducted negotiations for nearly five years just to get to this point” said Clutch Hitters Chairman Joe Bourdow. “It is time for the Tampa Bay Business community, public officials and the Rays to go to work in a collaborative effort to find the right solution to keep Major League Baseball in Tampa Bay in a location and facility where this significant economic asset can be sustained, grow attendance and thrive.”

The Clutch Hitters believe the proposed agreement fairly compensates the City of St. Petersburg should the Rays find a site outside of the city in the next three years, if a new stadium is built in Pinellas or Hillsborough and if the Rays begin playing there before 2027. The agreement is also crafted with the

intent of protecting the rights of the City should a new stadium not be built at all or, the team elects to leave Tampa Bay entirely before the current Use Agreement expires in 2027.

The agreement also allows the City of St. Petersburg to make its best case that a new stadium should be built inside the City limits; which Mayor Kriseman pledged to do yesterday morning. The Mayor said a case would be made based on the City's changing demographics, population and new construction, business growth and cultural amenities now gaining unprecedented national recognition for St. Petersburg.

The agreement also allows the City to simultaneously consider redevelopment of the Tropicana Field site should a stadium be built elsewhere in Tampa Bay. The Clutch Hitters believe that a formal process should begin immediately to fully assess the best use of this 85 acre site in the heart of fast growing downtown St. Petersburg.

"We recognize that St. Petersburg and Pinellas County fought long and hard to bring Major League Baseball to the City and the Tampa Bay community," said past Clutch Hitters Chair David Feaster. "Over the past 16 years, the City accomplished what it set out to do; successfully spawn the development of St. Petersburg and the waterfront."

"There will be some who believe the City should have have gotten more from this agreement," Bourdow said. "But time may now be running out to save Major League Baseball in Tampa Bay.

For the past several years, the Rays ownership has been consistent in their belief that operations in the current facility are not sustainable long term and in their requirement that all possible sites in Pinellas and Hillsborough be considered as possible sites for a new stadium. They have been patient up until now with declining attendance over the last few years while putting remarkably competitive teams on the field. But that patience now appears to be running out.

Further, the time to finance a new stadium may be running out at well.

Last year, the Bay Area Stadium Caucus, a collaborative effort of the St. Petersburg and Greater Tampa Chambers concluded that the cities and counties could fund a portion of a new stadium of \$500 million (including a \$100 million retractable roof) without imposing new taxes on their residents if the Rays cover a substantial portion as well. However, those funding sources are likely to dry up and be put to other uses if the process of finding the best stadium site is further delayed."

The time to move forward is now to protect this important regional asset that defines every city in Tampa Bay as "major league."

The Clutch Hitters urge City Council to vote yes and ratify the *Memorandum of Understanding!*

#### **About The Clutch Hitters...**

The Clutch Hitters of Tampa Bay is an organized group of business and community leaders founded in 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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