

Cooperstown Field of Dreams, Travis Bard

Timing, as they say, is everything. Even baseball games rely on timing – from the pitch and the swing, to whether or not you run or stay – everything revolves around a rhythm that cannot be ignored. Miss that timing, and you're out... there are no "mulligans" or second chances.

The same holds true in business as well; opportunities arise, and strike-outs or homeruns happen every day. Occasionally, however, perfect timing will align with all the right pieces in place for an extraordinary grand slam. And such could be the case with the proposed Cooperstown Dreams Park.

As a board member of the Central Arizona Partnership, I have studied dozens of development proposals to evaluate their benefits for our community. Rarely do all the elements come together in such a prudent plan to create the level of win-win situations that this tournament baseball facility likely could provide.

So while rumors may abound, let's look at what we've learned. The millions of dollars flowing into our area's economy are not based on projections, but on the actual performance of sister facilities in similar markets. And those figures have actually increased every year since 2008, despite the recession.

There is no doubt we must do our due diligence and involve both Prescott and Prescott Valley in that process. They both stand to benefit. If public dollars are invested, and they will be if the project is to come to the quad cities, we need to have all sides at the table reviewing the numbers, including other business interests and municipalities. Second, let's get creative on the water issue. I have discussed ball field water use with irrigations experts who state that technology exists to cut water use nearly in half. Plus, effluent will be used on any live grass, and artificial turf will cover the infield.

We also need to engage in some thoughtful analysis about whether this pursuing this opportunity adds or reduces our ability to attract other businesses that may be realistically within our grasp.

I suspect Cooperstown will fare well in all of our analysis, that we will find the jobs and other benefits it will produce are substantial and real. It is a project consistent with our county's all-American character, and indeed a huge opportunity that will move somewhere else if we balk.

We live in a very popular area that people want to visit. We also happen to live in a sales-tax-driven state that has been hit hard by the economy, so we must continue to offer new events which attract more visitors. That revenue not only ensures greater public services, but nourishes all local and regional businesses as well.

Pure and simple, this project could very well represent a solid investment in the fiscal health of our entire community, and the bases are loaded.

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