

## **First Energy Stadium Commission**

James Schlegel - Chairman  
Rick Denunzio - Vice Chairman/Secretary  
Rick Mountz - Member  
Michael Schorn - Member  
Gary Yeager, Jr. - Member  
Strat Marmarou - Commissioner Emeritus  
Donna Reed - City Council Liaison  
Carlos Torres - DPW Liaison

To: Members of City Council  
Re: 2022 Stadium Commission Annual Report  
From: James Schlegel, Chairperson, 2022  
Date: January 31, 2023

As Chairman of the Stadium Commission, it is with pleasure that I submit the following annual report.

Over the course of 2022, the Stadium Commission met six times, in accordance with procedures. The Commission is composed of five voting members; James Schlegel – Chairman, Rick Denunzio – Vice Chairman/Secretary and members Rick Mountz, Michael Schorn and Gary Yeager, Jr. Non-voting members include, Donna Reed, Liaison from City Council and Carlos Torres, Liaison from DPW. In January the Commission appointed Strat Marmarou, Commissioner Emeritus in recognition of his many years serving on both the Stadium Commission and City Council. Throughout the year, members of the Commission completed more than 200 hours of volunteer work at the stadium. This includes, attendance at games, interacting with fans, community functions and assisting with the 50/50 raffle.

In January, Scott Hunsicker, Fightin Phils General Manager presented a request for the Annual Appropriation of \$5,000 from the city for improvements to First Energy Stadium. The work included replacement of wood decking and masonry work throughout the deck area. The request was approved and the work was completed by March.

As the Commission entered 2022, we had already been faced with the challenges of complying with the new Professional Development League guidelines which included upgrades for all minor league stadiums. Initial architectural drawings had been completed with a total cost estimated at 16.5 million dollars. The anticipated funding was to be shared in the following manner: The City of Reading – 3 million dollars, The County of Berks – 3 million dollars, The Fightin Phils organization – 3 million dollars and The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – 7.5 million dollars. As the planning continued through the summer it was apparent that the cost of construction would be greater than initially anticipated. Some aspects of the design would need to be altered and more funds would be necessary. City Council was approached and they were able to award an additional 1.5 million dollars, The Commonwealth was also able to provide additional funding. As we reach the end of the year, all funding has been secured. Much appreciation goes to the City of Reading, The County of Berks, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and The Fightin Phils. The Commission also wishes to acknowledge the assistance of our state legislators, Judy Swank, Manny Guzman and Mark Rossi.

Following the baseball season in September, construction began with the assistance of Vo-tech students taking down portions of the brick wall surrounding the stadium. They cleaned and stacked the bricks which will be reused in the new construction project. The Commission was excited to see community involvement in such a project. As construction proceeded, we were informed of the overwhelming cooperation that was realized from all departments within the city administration. This includes The Mayor's Office, City Codes Department, Finance Department, City Manager and especially The Zoning Department and an array of other City employees. A special thanks goes to Frank Denbowski, former Chief of Staff to the Mayor and Managing Director for his ongoing support of the stadium and the Stadium Commission.

In October, an agreement was made between the Reading School District and the Fightin Phils to provide use of the stadium for all high school home baseball games starting with the 2023 season. The school district will be paying a fee for the use of the facility which also includes use for other school functions. Additionally, the Fightin Phils will be offering internship and summer employment opportunities for students.

Obviously, the Stadium Commission has been quite busy over the past year. We are now setting our sights on the upcoming baseball season and the completion of our new facility. We look forward to our continued work on behalf of the City of Reading and our citizens to ensure that our stadium remains a vital part of our city. It is with pride that we continue the tradition of being America's Classic Ballpark and forever being known as Baseballtown.