

Amendment isn't arbitrary

The Star Tribune's Oct. 29 editorial misrepresented the stadium financing charter amendment.

First, your writer incorrectly claimed that the \$10 million limit was set "arbitrarily." The amount was chosen because a \$9.8 million public safety upgrade was done to the Metrodome, and we (Progressive Minnesota) did not want to preclude public safety improvements to existing structures.

Second, the amendment would not stop the construction of a \$11 million athletic complex for city youth, as you suggested; Charter Amendment 145 applies only to professional sports facilities.

You also claimed that the amendment "arbitrarily requires" that the referendums be held at regularly schedule elections. This was done for two important reasons: to avoid the costs associated with special elections and to give citizens the needed time to understand the funding proposals for pro sports facilities that will be put before them on the ballot. The idea was to avoid an issue being sprung at the last minute like Mayor Coleman did to St. Paul citizens, where his hockey funding scheme was pushed through in seven days with very little public discussion.

— **Bob Greenberg**, *Progressive Minnesota Steering Committee member, Minneapolis.*

Voters are split on city dollars for stadium

Backers and critics say confusion about referendum, possible sale of Vikings may be factors in poll results.

By Dennis J. McGrath
Star Tribune Staff Writer

After a week that brought a number of bold headlines and jolting news on the sports front, here's yet another surprise: Likely voters in Minneapolis are evenly split on a charter amendment to restrict city spending on a new stadium.

The Star Tribune/KMSP-TV Minnesota Poll found that 48 percent of likely voters would vote against the amendment, while 46 percent would vote for it. That's a statistical dead heat just two days before Election Day.

"Really!?" said Shelly Regan, president of the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, when told of the poll results Saturday. The chamber opposes the amendment, but Regan had shared the conventional wisdom that the strong antistadium attitude would result in overwhelming approval of the amendment.

Regan and Jim Mangan, chair of Progressive Minnesota, the group that put the charter question on the ballot, agreed that confusion over what a 'yes' or a

Minnesota Poll

Minneapolis amendment

"In addition to voting for mayor, you will be asked to vote for or against an amendment to the city's charter. This amendment would allow city officials to spend up to \$10 million for sports facilities, but if they want to spend more than that, a referendum would be required to get voter approval. Will you vote for or against this amendment?"



Source: Star Tribune/KMSP-TV Minnesota Poll of 904 likely voters in Minneapolis Oct. 28-31. Margin of sampling error: no greater than 5.1 percentage points, plus or minus.

Star Tribune graphic

'no' vote on the amendment means is probably one reason for the split opinion.

Mangan said his group is modifying its literature to 'make it more clear that people who oppose or who want to limit public funding for a stadium should vote "yes" on the amendment.

If approved, the amendment would limit city spending on any professional sports facility, including a new Twins stadium, to \$10 million. If the city wanted to spend more than that, it would have to seek voter approval in the next regular election.

Mary Dadovich, one of the 904

Minneapolis residents interviewed in the poll, said she opposes public funding but didn't know which way to vote on the amendment.

"I wasn't sure if voting 'no' meant they *can* spend \$10 million or it meant 'no, you can't spend anything,'" said Dadovich, a 38-year-old Camden neighborhood resident.

But Regan said other forces may also be at work. The news that the Vikings may be sold to out-of-town buyers surfaced last week, and the prospects of losing two pro sports teams may be causing people to reexamine their

More information:

Stadium referendum

If you need more information about the stadium charter amendment that will be on the Minneapolis ballot Tuesday, here are some resources:

- ▶ **Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce:** Opposes the charter amendment. Call Monday after 8:30 a.m.: 370-9132.
- ▶ **Progressive Minnesota:** Placed the amendment on the ballot. Call 641-6199.
- ▶ **To listen to recordings of essays written by these two groups for the Star Tribune's Voter's Guide:** Call 673-9045.
- ▶ **To read the essays and the charter amendment language, visit** <http://www.startribune.com/stonline/election>.

antistadium attitude, she said.

The chamber also has argued that people should vote 'no' on the amendment because the charter change would handcuff elected officials and could lead to more government-by-referendum.

Progressive Minnesota has said the spending restriction should be put in place to ensure that residents have a say in how much money the city contributes to any stadium.

Setting straight the vote to fund a Twins stadium

By Dennis J. McGrath
Star Tribune Staff Writer

For the first time in the debate over a new Twins stadium, voters will have a chance to weigh in Tuesday.

Voters in the Twins' hometown will be able to say whether they want to restrict the amount of public subsidies that Minneapolis may contribute to a stadium.

However, there appears to be confusion about what the proposed charter amendment does. Here are a series of questions and answers intended to clarify the issue.

Q What does the amendment do?

A It would amend the Minneapolis City Charter to limit city spending on any professional sports facility, such as a new Twins stadium, to \$10 million unless voters give specific approval. To get that approval, the city would have to place a referendum on the ballot in the next regularly scheduled election.



Election

Turn to **ELECTION on B2**

ELECTION from B1

If amendment is adopted, city must get OK for more spending

Q So a "yes" vote on the amendment is a vote to force city officials to hold another election if they want to spend more than \$10 million on a Twins stadium?

A That's correct. If the amendment is adopted, it doesn't automatically mean that spending will be capped at \$10 million. It just means city officials would have to seek voters' OK before spending more than that amount.

Q And a "no" vote on the amendment is a vote to leave the decision up to the City Council and mayor, right?

A That's right. Voting "no" on the amendment means you don't want to restrict their authority.

Q How did the amendment get on the ballot?

A A political party called Progressive Minnesota proposed the amendment. The City Charter Commission reviewed it and decided not to place it on the ballot. But Progressive Minnesota pursued the other route to getting an amendment on the ballot — a petition drive — and was successful.

Q Why is Progressive Minnesota proposing this amendment?

A The group says that Minneapolis elected officials don't seem to be listening to residents' opposition to public funding for a stadium. Adoption of the amendment will ensure that Minneapolis residents have a say in how much money the city can spend, the party says. The party opposes public subsidies for professional sports, but is open to the idea of community ownership of pro sports teams. Progressive Minnesota is urging a "yes" vote.

Q How much is the city planning on spending?

A That hasn't been decided yet, but proposals at the Legislature assume that if a stadium is built in Minneapolis, then the city and Hennepin County together would contribute \$50 million in land, site preparation and other aid.

Q Are any groups opposing the amendment?

A Yes. The Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Council both rec-

ommend a "no" vote on the amendment. Here's the chamber's position: Elected officials were elected to make decisions, so don't handcuff them. If you don't like what the politicians decide, then vote them out of office. But don't alter the City Charter just because of the strong emotions swirling around the stadium debate.

Q Even though I'm against public subsidies for a stadium, are there reasons why I might want to vote against the amendment?

A Progressive Minnesota says no, that the amendment is narrowly worded so that it only affects spending on professional sports facilities. And even then, it just says voters must give their approval before spending more than \$10 million.

But the chamber says the amendment could have unintended consequences. Because it would limit spending until voters

give their approval at the next regularly scheduled election, it could prevent city officials from acting swiftly in the future, even in cases where there is public support for spending on a pro sports facility.

Q If I vote Tuesday, but decide to skip the ballot question, does that count as a "no" vote?

A No. In order to pass, the amendment must get approval from 51 percent of those voting on the issue. But the amendment will be decided only by those who cast "yes" and "no" votes.

Q If I live outside Minneapolis, can I still vote on the issue?

A Not unless you're planning on breaking the law. The issue will only be on the Minneapolis ballot. Don't bother looking for it if you live outside the city.

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Sports spending limit approved

By Jay Weiner
Star Tribune Staff Writer

YES

NO

70%

30%

Minneapolis voters overwhelmingly approved a city charter amendment that will restrict city spending on pro sports facilities, including any new Twins stadium.

The change limits spending at \$10 million unless voters approve more in a future referendum.

There was a swift response to the voters' antistadium message: St. Paul might be the site of choice, if the Legislature can ever come up with a ballpark funding plan. St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman said he expects a ballpark would be built in Minneapolis, despite approval of the amendment by 70 percent to 30 percent. But he added: "If there's an opportunity to get them in St. Paul, I will work for that."

Gov. Arne Carlson, a stadium backer, said he thinks Tuesday's vote "will be an impediment to the stadium going to Minneapolis."

Turn to **STADIUM** on **A17**

STADIUM from A1

And the leading supporter of a ballpark in the Legislature, Rep. Ann Rest, DFL-New Hope, said that although she still supports Minneapolis as the site, "this is an indication we should look at other places."

Jim Mangan, chair of Progressive Minnesota, the political party that sponsored the amendment, said he didn't view the victory as a rejection of a Twins stadium in Minneapolis. "Nothing in this amendment prohibits them from building a stadium," he said. "For Minneapolis to build a stadium now, [city officials are] going to have to convince the voters . . . that there's a payoff for the public's investment."

Said House Speaker Phil Carruthers, DFL-Brooklyn Center: "This certainly isn't good news for the stadium proponents."

Shelly Regan, president of the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, whose organization opposed the amendment, said she fears the vote sets a precedent for deciding public policy by referendum and not by elected officials.

"It begins to erode what representative government means," she said.

But the Rev. Ricky Rask, a member of Progressive Minnesota's steering committee, said, "Had we been listened to in a way that was respectful and honored the integrity of our constituency, we would not have gone to this. We are no longer going to sit back and not be listened to."

Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton proposed a \$58.4 million stadium package last summer, with Hennepin County, the Minneapolis Park Board and local banks as partners. Some members of the City Council and the business community have said that city officials can work around the \$10 million limit.

For instance, a \$22 million parking ramp in Sayles Belton's stadium plan could be built by private sources or as part of a plan to aid the University of Minnesota's parking problems, said Sam Grabarski, president of the Minneapolis Downtown Council.

But Sayles Belton said Tuesday night: "I always said if the voters approved the referendum, we would live by it." Meanwhile, in Pittsburgh, voters rejected by a 3-2 margin a half-cent sales tax to fund stadiums for the football Steelers and baseball Pirates.