

Sen. Carpenter: Baseball Park District should be audited before any public funds are approved for AmFam Field

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(MADISON)—Today, Senator Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) issued the following statement in response to details of a potential Republican proposal to finance ongoing maintenance of American Family Field using taxpayer funds:

“The public and their representatives in our state and local governments have an obligation to turn over every stone before any public funds are approved for a luxury project like extending the operations of American Family Field beyond the termination of its lease in 2030. That is why I am calling for an audit of the Southeast Wisconsin Professional Baseball Park District to take place before any funds are allocated for that purpose.

“When the 5-County Sales Tax was finally sunsetted in 2020, the District had established the necessary funds to maintain the Stadium through 2040, in anticipation of a lease extension which is an option available to the Brewers. This was verified in a 2019 study commissioned by the District, conducted by the financial advisory group PFM. The District explained it would be able to meet its obligations of landlord operations, and shared expenses for major capital repairs and property insurance premiums through 2040.

“What changed between then and now? Somehow, in order to realize an extension of 10 years beyond that position, the people of Wisconsin and Milwaukee County are being expected to pony up an additional 500 million

dollars.

“Many assurances were given in 1995, when the Baseball Park District was created to oversee the construction and maintenance of the ballpark. Several of my colleagues in the legislature and I demanded to know what would happen if the construction of the stadium went over budget—we were assured that it would not. We asked what would happen if the 5-County sales and use tax did not sunset in 2014 as discussed, and we were told that it would not endure past 2014.

“Other promises were made, but the people selling this deal were never capable of keeping them. Today we are being asked to consider another gargantuan investment of taxpayer dollars into a thriving sports franchise. \$500 million would be coming from Wisconsin taxpayers rather than the millionaires who make up the team and its owners.

“This requires thorough vetting. A state audit of the Baseball Park District has not been undertaken since 2002, and I believe it’s time to brush the dust off those accounting books and verify the Baseball Park District’s position before we bring this bill up for a hearing or vote.”