



Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Elizabeth Steiner, Co- Chair
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Tuesday, May 3rd 2023

Year after year , since 1955, generations of Oregonian families have made Emeralds baseball their summer tradition. Today, the Eugene Emeralds are entering a new chapter in our long and storied history. For 47 years, we've played short-season professional baseball. Historically, the season started in mid-June and ended Labor Day weekend. In 2020, Major League Baseball (MLB) assigned the Eugene Emeralds to MLB's new Professional Development League (PDL) which is what used to be Minor League Baseball. The Emeralds are now playing in High-A long season professional baseball with a new affiliate in the San Francisco Giants. Our baseball season now starts in early April and ends in mid-September. What used to be a 76-game season will now be 132-games providing more opportunity for our community to gather.

While we are absolutely thrilled about the promotion to High-A Baseball, the Emeralds find themselves in a challenging situation at PK Park due to several key aspects: an overlapping season with the Ducks (which competes February thru mid-June), competing concessions, sponsorships, ticketing sales, and facility access. When the agreement between the University of Oregon and the Emeralds was forged in 2009, there was never a thought of long season baseball with 74% more games. This significant overlap can work in the very short-term, however, new MLB and PDL facility requirements are mandated to be completed by the 2025 season. For example, the requirements include properly sized locker rooms for home and away teams, male and female staff locker rooms, gym, male and female umpire locker rooms – all of which do not exist at PK Park. We literally have 4 construction trailers around the perimeter of Autzen which host teams as their "locker rooms". All of these challenges make our current situation at PK Park untenable. We cannot meet these requirements at PK Park, therefore our only viable options are to either build a new stadium in the Eugene/Springfield area, or MLB will move the Emeralds to a new market.

This is a unique opportunity to build a new multi-use facility anchored by the Emeralds in a community that badly needs more multi-use facilities. This new facility will be owned by Lane County and operated by the Emeralds. The facility will not only host Emeralds games but will host High School baseball games, graduations, concerts, non-profit events, holiday events and will be a wonderful new asset to an aging Lane Events Center. The Emeralds are one of the most respected and awarded Minor League professional baseball teams in the country. We are affordable family fun for every community member. As Lane County continues to grow, it is facilities like this that will provide quality entertainment, and will be an important resource during and after any emergency/disaster relief.

This project came to life in 2022 due to the State Legislature funding \$7.5 million which was half of the requested amount of \$15M. The project site has been determined to be in the northwest corner of the Lane Event Center Fairground campus. The Lane County Commissioners voted unanimously to increase tourism taxes by 2 points. The Federal Government has awarded the project with \$1.5 million to be used for immediate occupancy. The Emeralds are also putting \$13.4 million towards this effort. We are almost there but still need your help. Please support Lane County and this project get closer to the finish line by funding \$7.5 million to build a new multi-use facility.

Thank for all you do,

Allan Benavides, General Manager

Eugene Emeralds Baseball Club

High-A West Affiliate | San Francisco Giants

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