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Group Opposes New Chicago Bears Stadium Using Taxpayer Funds.

As the Chicago Bears appear to be headed for greener pastures outside of the city, one organization is telling the team to build a new stadium without taxpayer assistance.

The team has purchased the former Arlington Racecourse property for a possible new home.

Americans for Prosperity is urging members of the Arlington Heights Village Board to adopt an “anti-corporate welfare” ordinance and reject proposals that would build a new Chicago Bears stadium with taxpayer money.

“They absolutely can build this on their own without having the taxpayers finance parts of the stadium or the infrastructure around the stadium,” Americans for Prosperity Illinois State Director Brain Costin said.

The group is collecting signatures and intends to present the ordinance to the village board, which includes the following language:

“1. BAN OF CORPORATE WELFARE PROGRAMS. The Village of Arlington Heights is prohibited from offering or extending any financial incentive to any business or corporation to operate in the village.

2. DEFINITIONS. For use in this ordinance, “incentive” means any economic, financial benefit, or other incentives, including, but not limited to, those authorized under the Property Tax Code, the Counties Code, the Illinois Municipal Code (including, but not limited to, the Tax Increment Allocation Redevelopment Act), or any other provision of law authorizing abatements, credits, loans or tax or fee reductions.”

Chicago officials have offered to make renovations to Soldier Field in an effort to prevent the Bears from leaving town, but so far, team officials said they are not interested.

The Bears previously discussed the possibility of building a stadium in Arlington Heights about 50 years ago, but instead renovated Soldier Field with the state of Illinois raising funds to help the team do so. The stadium also underwent a major renovation in 2002.

Several NFL teams have used public financing to pay for new stadiums, including a 45% share of the Minnesota Vikings stadium, and an enormous 86% share in Indianapolis for the Colts stadium.

“By enacting an anti-corporate welfare ordinance, Arlington Heights would declare an end to economically destructive and corrupt policies of corporate welfare,” Costin said. “When select corporations get special tax breaks, subsidies, and loopholes other businesses and residents have to pay more in taxes to make up for it.”

By Kevin Bessler | The Center Square

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