

## Will a new Bills stadium be built in the Falls? Recent meetings, political connections fuel rumors

Put this column in the category of conjecture - of the educated kind.

Consider: As New York State officials contemplate how best to raise additional funding and the jockeying for legalized gaming continues, New York State, Western New York and the management of the Buffalo Bills are seeking a way to keep the team in the region.

Those in the know and around the NFL say the Bills present stadium in Orchard Park is substandard and that any investment would be nothing more than a short-term fix.

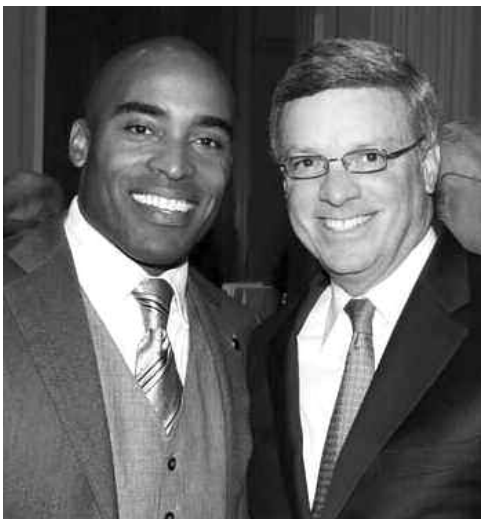
Now consider: The city of Indianapolis hosted the Super Bowl between the New York Giants and New England Patriots. How did this small-market city end up with the most watched event in the world, with an estimated economic benefit to the region exceeding \$500 million?

The answer is simple. Indianapolis built a state-of-the-art indoor facility.

This is why some point to Niagara Falls as the ultimate, logical destination for the Buffalo Bills.

Recent articles published by the Reporter have pointed out the fact that Niagara Falls would be at least 45 minutes closer to the Bills fan base in Toronto, where the majority of the income within 100 miles of Western New York is located.

Political watchers and the proverbial power brokers have also rationalize that this is how Gov. Andrew Cuomo can solve a number of Western New York challenges. First, the Governor and his people know the long-term stadium issue must be resolved during the current administration.



*NFL great Tiki Barber and CEO of the 2014 Super Bowl host committee Alfred Kelly, former president of American Express*

Second, Niagara Falls is in such dire straits that the Governor and his staffers realize that, if they have aspirations for higher office, fixing a high profile address such as the Falls would be something the Governor can point to once the city is on the road to recovery.

In addition and in keeping with the nature of conjectural things, some point to the close relationship between Gov. Cuomo and Manhattan philanthropist and billionaire Howard Milstein as a reason to suspect some substantive things might actually be happening behind the scenes to bring a stadium and the Buffalo Bills to Niagara Falls.

Milstein owns Niagara Falls Redevelopment which owns more than 140 acres in downtown Niagara Falls. It has been suggested, and quite possibly qualifies, as an ideal site for a new stadium.

Last Friday, the Former American Express Co. president Alfred F. Kelly Jr., who will oversee preparations for history's first open-air, cold-weather Super Bowl at New Meadowlands in 2014, was seated next to former NY Giants great Tiki Barber at the Federal Law Enforcement Foundation's (FLEF) annual awards ceremony, an event hosted by Anthony Bergamo, who happens to be president of Niagara Falls Redevelopment, as well as chairman of FLEF.

Rumors abound that Milstein may be the next owner of the Buffalo Bills and that Bergamo has been quietly arranging meetings, bringing football industry people together to accomplish this goal.

It may not be far fetched.

When contacted by the Reporter, Bergamo declined comment on this topic.

Nevertheless, at the end of the day, no matter how you cut it, building a

stadium with a world famous address such as Niagara Falls makes sense and will bring a new glamour and power to the franchise, as, for instance, when TV cameras come to town and show the mighty Falls next to the mighty Buffalo Bills.

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