

EFFORTS IN SUPPORT OF THE LAKE MONSTERS,
CENTENNIAL FIELD AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Ten.....

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

That WHEREAS, the Vermont Lake Monsters minor-league baseball team is a source of pride to all Vermonters, most particularly to Burlingtonians as residents of the host city, and is one of the state’s most popular summer attractions, with approximately 1.7 million fans having attended Lake Monsters games at Centennial Field over the past 16 years; and

WHEREAS, in the eyes of its owner, the Lake Monsters are about providing wholesome family fun at a reasonable price; and

WHEREAS, the long-term future of the Lake Monsters, despite their popularity within our community, remains uncertain and the very real possibility exists that this year will be the last year for the franchise, at least in Burlington; and

WHEREAS, this uncertainty stems from the poor condition of Centennial Field and the rapidly approaching expiration in September of the Player Development Contract between the Lake Monsters’ owner and the Major League Baseball (MLB) Washington Nationals team; and

WHEREAS, Centennial Field has had a proud history in its 104 years, with its first games in 1906 coming before the openings of Fenway Park (1912) and Wrigley Field (1913) and with players such as Tris Speaker, the Hall of Fame center fielder, flitting across the outfield in a 1910 exhibition game, and Johnny Podres, the left-hander who clinched the Brooklyn Dodgers’ only championship in 1955, tossing his first professional pitches here, Paul O’Neill, playing for the 1984 Eastern League champion Vermont Reds before becoming a central player in the New

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York Yankee dynasty of the 1990s, Orlando Cabrera, playing second base for the Vermont Expos in 1995 but playing short stop for the Red Sox when they broke the curse of the Bambino in 2004, and finally in 1988, an 18-year-old Ken Griffey Jr. playing 17 games here, his last in the minors before leaving for stardom in Seattle; and

WHEREAS, MLB, after inspecting Centennial Field, has granted waivers for the past several years because the facility fails to meet minimum safety standards for a minor-league field but is now demanding that improvements be made in order for a minor league team to continue playing here; and

WHEREAS, the most recent MLB report, dated October 8, 2007, indicated that the playing field, the field lighting, dugouts, bullpens and clubhouses were below standards for Class A baseball and players themselves have said the clubhouse is the worst in the New York-Penn League; and

WHEREAS, preliminary estimates stated that \$20 million was required to eliminate unsafe conditions and replace substandard locker rooms, lights and other items but the Preservation Trust of Vermont, in its latest estimate, believes that \$4 million would be sufficient to cure many problems, although fundraising has been difficult because of the state of the economy and other financial demands; and

WHEREAS, improvements to Centennial Field must not only be sufficient to meet league standards, but also to improve the facility for fans of the team, to help ensure steady or increased attendance into the future; and

WHEREAS, the situation is such that the Lake Monsters owner himself has chosen to personally pay for some improvements to Centennial Field over the years and this year is

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replacing some non-functioning lights, despite the fact that the team does not generate a profit;
and

WHEREAS, since the Lake Monsters came to Burlington, the popularity of minor-league baseball has soared and the possibility of losing the team would deal a serious blow to Burlington's economy since the franchise pays rent to the University of Vermont for use of Centennial Field and provides employment, generates revenue through taxes on payroll and on the sale of merchandise, and the sale of food and beverages at the park, and while the Vermont players spend money while here so do the visiting teams when they use local hotels and restaurants; and

WHEREAS, the president of the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce has noted that "[w]hen people consider relocating their businesses to our region, when entrepreneurs consider where to locate a start-up company, we face stiff competition from other regions with large checkbooks and big tax incentives . . . yes, we boast that, unlike cities many times our size, we can even offer minor league baseball . . . Losing even one of our distinguishing characteristics makes it that much harder for us to be competitive.";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Burlington City Council directs the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) to meet and confer with representatives of the Lake Monsters, UVM, the Douglas Administration and our Congressional delegation and explore potential strategies that will ensure that the Lake Monsters remain based in Burlington;
and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of CEDO or his designee is requested to report back to this Council with proposals for its consideration at its meeting on August 9, 2010.