

Alex Tavlian: Losing Giants' affiliation is more about Fresno than about baseball

Fresno City Council Member Oliver Baines may not have known it in February, but he stumbled upon the new motto of Fresno for the time being.

"It's not perfect, but it's good."

That line, muttered during a sloggng City Council meeting to decide the fate of the Fulton Mall, perfectly describes where Fresno is at the moment.

We're a work in very slow progress.

Losing the San Francisco Giants affiliation was just as much, if not more, about the status of Fresno as it was about balls and strikes.

And from outsiders looking in, Fresno has been resting on its laurels too much since coming off the brink of complete economic calamity.

Based on reports of the Giants' back-room discussion with Fresno officials, the Giants had the perfect amount of leverage to demand Fresno do what voters have asked for a decade: a better airport, a vibrant downtown and a safer place to catch a baseball game.

The Giants' move from Fresno was a confluence of events that Fresnans ought to marvel at — it brought together two strange bedfellows in city leaders and the Grizzlies to visualize a common goal, albeit hard to achieve during a two-week negotiating period.

And while the Astros are coming in as the new Major League Baseball affiliate for Fresno (solving the Grizzlies' main problem), City Hall shouldn't take the demands laid out by the Giants lightly.

Because what the Giants demanded of Fresno is exactly what any decent-sized business will ask of City Hall when pondering the idea of operating out of California's fifth-largest city.

The pace of change in downtown is glacial. As Sacramento completely rips out its K Street Mall to make way for the Kings' new arena, Fresno has yet to even cause a scratch on Victor Gruen's controversial mall.

And while Fresno Yosemite International continues to break its own records for air travel out of the air terminal, we still manage to lose budget airlines like Frontier and popular routes like those to Las Vegas by United.

Perhaps it's because we've failed to appropriately market flights to FYI for folks traveling to Yosemite during peak travel times. Or it's because we refuse to fly out of Fresno in the first place.

While I'm not expecting Mayor Ashley Swearingin to appear in commercials skiing down the slopes of China Peak and mimicking a certain former governor touting the skiing in Lake Tahoe, we really ought to appeal to the Sierra Nevada's nationwide visitors and actually commit to flying out of our own hub.

In an economy dictated by "vote with your feet," it might be obvious why Fresno Yosemite International and Chukchansi Park have difficulty competing with Sacramento International or Raley Field. *We don't show up.*

As the Fresno Grizzlies frequently cause City Hall to reach for the Tylenol, these issues we face are bigger than

baseball. And though other public works projects — like the thorny high-speed rail — are touted as the saving grace for Fresno and the Valley, how can we not invest in ourselves and our future?

To those waiting in the wings for 2016, this is a message to you: It's time for City Hall to think big.

And for the Giants fans dismayed that Fresno will take over as the top-rated Triple-A team affiliated with the Astros, just say these words: They're the team Fresno deserves, but not the team Fresno needs now.

Alex Tavlian is the owner of Sultana Media and a former reporter in Fresno and Sacramento. He can be reached at alex@tavlian.com or on Twitter @tavlian.

Copyright

© 2014 www.fresnobee.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.fresnobee.com>