

JOHN WADE: MBA'S VOICE OF GREATER MINNESOTA



Commissioner John Wade & son Adam at ballpark groundbreaking.

When John Wade was about 13 years old, he attended his most memorable baseball game: The Minnesota Twins against the Milwaukee Brewers. It was 1975, the year Hank Aaron was traded to the Brewers to finish out his career in the state where it all began for the Hall of Famer.

Just as Commissioner Wade will always remember that day the Twins beat the Brewers 2 to 1, he hopes his 13-year-old son, Adam, will always remember the day his dad took him and his sister, Sarah, to the August groundbreaking of the new Twins stadium.

“To see the excitement in Adam’s eyes about what this new ballpark means for the Twins and for the state of Minnesota was a really cool experience,” says Wade, who was appointed to the Minnesota Ballpark Authority by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Wade, who also serves as treasurer for the Ballpark Authority, has been president of the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce since June 2002. Prior to that, he served in vice president positions, including Vice President for Government & Public Affairs for Bresnan Communications, which was acquired by Charter Communications during his tenure there.

Wade’s interest in politics increased after the five years he spent as a general sales manager for KTTC-TV, a local Rochester station. In 1996, three years after leaving the station, he became Chief of Staff for then-Rochester Congressman Gil Gutknecht, and later chaired his re-election committee.

“All the Commissioners come to the table with different qualifications,” says Wade, who has also been a part of building projects in Rochester and even spent a year in Denmark building a television network. “Being a part of deliberative bodies for a number of years prepares one well for a commissioner post with the Ballpark Authority. Collectively we have a wisdom in that group that serves the people in the state of Minnesota well and we are not afraid to ask tough questions.”

He adds that he will ask critical questions of contractors working on the building of the ballpark, but even more importantly, he will verify the data and the information in the proposals presented to the board.

As treasurer, Wade says, “My biggest concern regarding the build of the ballpark is not only is it worthy of the people of Minnesota, but that it is on time and on budget, and that we, the Commissioners, are good stewards of the people’s money.”

There are a lot of very important decisions to be made about the construction, the maintenance and operation of the ballpark whether from a financial standpoint, the stability and functionality of the facility itself, or from how they will impact a fan’s experience at the ballpark.

For example, ample restroom space is planned to cut down on long lines typical of womens’ bathrooms at other venues. And factoring in how weather can impact an outdoor stadium, half of the 40,000 seats at the park will be under cover—without distracting from the view. “There will not be a bad seat in the new ballpark,” Wade says.

“We have the taxpayer and the average Minnesotan in mind when building this ballpark and we consider their values when we make common sense decisions,” he says.

“When we look at the type of ballpark we are going to build coupled with the excitement the Twins generate, it will be an experience that people in Minnesota will enjoy, and it will make them proud of the state, the ballpark and the Twins.”

Wade, who grew up in Rochester watching most of the games on TV but did travel to the Cities to see many of them in person, says, “Regardless of whether you get in your car and head to the ballpark from Mankato or Duluth or Winona or Edina, I am confident the drive will be worth the trip.”