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MINUTES OF THE FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING  
OF THE AMERICAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Held August 14, 1959

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Pursuant to invitation extended by Lamar Hunt of Dallas, Texas, the first meeting of the organizing group to form a new major professional football league in the United States met in the South Imperial Suite of The Conrad Hilton, Chicago, Illinois, on Friday, August 14, 1959, at the hour of 9:00 o'clock in the morning.

There were present:

- K. S. (Bud) Adams, Houston, Texas,  
representing himself
- E. W. Boyer, Minneapolis, Minnesota,  
President of Chamber of Commerce
- Spencer Dean, Minneapolis, Minnesota,  
representing Jack Maloney
- Gregory R. Dillon, Chicago, Illinois,  
and Los Angeles, California, attorney  
for Barron Hilton
- Tom Eddy, Los Angeles, California,  
representing Barron Hilton
- Robert L. Howsam, Denver, Colorado,  
representing himself
- Lamar Hunt, Dallas, Texas, representing  
himself
- Sidney Lathan, Dallas, Texas, attorney  
for Lamar Hunt
- John Monroe, Los Angeles, California,  
representing Barron Hilton
- Willard Rhodes, Seattle, Washington,  
representing a group
- Max Winter, Minneapolis, Minnesota,  
representing himself
- Harry Wismer, New York, New York,  
representing himself

*Houston  
Minneapolis*

*L.A.*

*Denver*

*Seattle?*

*N.Y.*

Mr. Lamar Hunt was chosen temporary chairman of the meeting, and Mr. Gregory R. Dillon served as temporary secretary and kept the minutes.

The Chairman stated that the first matter to come before the meeting was brief report on his activities leading up to this first organizational meeting. He informed the

meeting that he had discussed the idea of a new professional football league with everyone present and, in addition, Mr. Barron Hilton of Los Angeles, California, who unfortunately was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Hunt made it clear that in forming the new league it was not his intention nor the intention of anyone he had spoken to about the league to seek out cities where franchises would be located. He advised the group that the cities represented at this meeting, as well as the individuals representing such cities, had all shown a serious interest in the organization of the league and had demonstrated to him the financial and moral responsibility of the interested parties in the new league. He further informed the group that his basic and preliminary plans with respect to the organization and development of the league were based on the fact that there would be either a six or eight-team league comprising franchises in cities being athletic-minded and which are, in addition, growing both in population and industry.

Mr. Hunt went on to state that as a result of his preliminary talks with everyone in the room all of the cities represented had assured him that they were ready to proceed with the establishment of the league with the exception of Seattle, which was decidedly interested and definitely ready to join the group, provided it could work out certain problems it had with respect to stadium facilities.

He went on to say, however, that even though the Seattle group was not ready to definitely commit itself, he had invited Willard Rhodes to report on the Seattle area, and he was going to call on Mr. Rhodes to submit his report first.

Mr. Rhodes introduced himself as President of Pacific Northwest Sports, Inc., originally organized for the specific purpose of attracting to Seattle a professional football franchise from the National Football League. He stated that he had with him a letter, dated February 24, 1958, which was written to Bert Bell, Commissioner of the National Football League, specifically detailing the organization of his group, its long range goals, the advantage of a professional football franchise being located at Seattle and the problems which faced a franchise holder at the outset. Mr. Rhodes stated that in spite of the apparent advantage of locating a franchise in the Pacific Northwest area because of the growth of population and industry, the National Football League, without actually refusing to entertain Seattle as a location, nevertheless made no serious or constructive effort to include Seattle. He indicated that the citizens of Seattle, like other cities in the United States, had been given the run-around by the National Football League.

Mr. Rhodes then read the letter of February 24, 1958, to the meeting pointing up as he went along that the organizing group consists of eighteen individuals who are highly respected throughout the State of Washington. He stated that they were all financially sound businessmen who did not intend to rely upon the business of professional football for their livelihoods. He stated that two key factors in any move toward obtaining a franchise for Seattle was the availability of the University of Washington Stadium and sufficient capital. Although capital is never a matter to be taken lightly, Mr. Rhodes emphasized that his group felt that it was the lesser of their problems. With respect to the University of Washington Stadium, which seats 55,000 people, he reported that Governor Albert D. Rosellini has openly supported the use of the Stadium for professional football, as have other civic leaders. He also emphasized that the press and public sentiment were also in favor of using the Stadium, but the Board of Regents of the University must be unanimous in their consent. Mr. Rhodes impressed upon the group that he and his associates were confident that they could convince the Board to agree to the use of the Stadium for professional football; however, as of this date, approval had not been received, and it would be necessary to take the matter up again with the Board of Regents.

In discussing the advantages of the Seattle area, Mr. Rhodes stated that the Seattle Metropolitan Area consists of approximately 1,600,000 residents, including Tacoma and the other cities lying in the area referred to as the Puget Sound Region. Portland was only a matter of two hours away from Seattle by highway and only a matter of minutes away by air. In addition, Vancouver, Canada, lies directly to the North of Seattle, and this area has not only experienced a substantial growth in population, but also a tremendous surge of interest in athletics.

He pointed out that the State of Washington is a great vacationland not only during the summer months, but also during the Fall of the year. This is especially true during the period of the year of the "Seafair Week", which includes the running of the famous Gold Cup Race on Lake Washington. In closing Mr. Rhodes emphasized that the Seattle area not only had the physical facilities and population for the development of a major professional football team, but also a keen interest on the part of the population in all forms of athletics, and he also emphasized that it was the desire of his group to work closely with the newly proposed American Football League and be included as one of the originating teams when the franchises are approved.

Mr. Hunt thanked Mr. Rhodes for his report and asked the Secretary to have a copy of the letter of February 24, 1958, which Mr. Rhodes read at the meeting, attached to each copy of the minutes so that all the principals would receive a copy. Mr. Hunt then stated that it was necessary for the Seattle group to work out their problems with respect to a stadium.

He indicated that possibly the league would start with only six teams and add two more at a later date. Even though this might possibly be construed as weakness in the league, Mr. Hunt stated that he wanted to be certain that when the league actually was formed none of the originating teams would have problems with respect to either stadium facilities or financing. Mr. Hunt, however, assured Mr. Rhodes that Seattle would definitely be included if it was able to give the rest of the proposed league the assurances that were required with respect to the stadium facilities.

Mr. John Monroe then asked about other cities, specifically San Francisco and Miami. Mr. Hunt informed Mr. Monroe that he had spoken to a Mr. McEwan of San Francisco who was definitely interested as an individual but not as part of a group; however, Mr. McEwan informed him that he did not want to put a team in the league the first year of play but would like to be a part of the Los Angeles group in order to gain experience for the first year or two and then return to San Francisco after that time. No commitments, however, were made to Mr. McEwan.

He stated that as far as Miami was concerned the type of population did not seem to be such that it would support a professional football team. Harry Wismer, however, stated that Senator George Smathers is interested in the development of his state and that if the league wanted to entertain a candidate from Miami, Senator Smathers could put the league in touch with the right people. At this point, however, Mr. Hunt emphasized again that we should not solicit candidates, but if people were interested enough to become a part of this project, they should contact the new league.

Mr. Hunt then mentioned Buffalo and stated that according to certain surveys that had recently been made, Buffalo was one of the most athletically inclined cities in the United States and further that within a radius of 75 miles from Buffalo there was a population of approximately 5,000,000. He stated that it was the greatest Metropolitan Area in the United States without a major league baseball

*Don't  
solicit  
candidates*

team and that Buffalo would definitely be considered not only because of these facts, but because it was felt that there should be another team in the East to establish a rivalry with New York. He informed the group, however, that he had not wanted to include Buffalo in the first meeting since he wanted to discuss all of the aspects of the area with the other interested parties.

Mr. Hunt then called upon Mr. Adams to report on the situation in Houston. Mr. Adams informed the group that within a radius of 100 miles of Houston there is a population of approximately 2,000,000. He stated that Rice University has a fine stadium that was built eight years ago and is now completely paid off, but that it would possibly be difficult to arrival at an understanding with the Board of Regents, even though he is close to them, since they are not necessarily interested in making money and he knows that some of them have reservations about professional athletics.

Mr. Adams went on to state, however, that in addition to the facilities at Rice University, there was the Jefferson High School Stadium, the capacity of which could be increased from its present 32,000 to 50,000 at not too great an expense.

The third alternative was that he felt something could be worked out with the University of Houston, which uses the Rice University facilities and is not happy about doing so whereby the University of Houston and the new professional team could together build a new stadium.

In spite of the problems as far as facilities are concerned, Mr. Adams is ready to put a team into Houston. He stated that possibly at the outset Jefferson High School Stadium with some improvements would be adequate, especially considering the fact that the Chicago Cardinals only averaged 13,000 per game during the 1958 season. Mr. Adams informed the group that he was going to take the franchise on an individual basis and did not plan to take in any partners.

Mr. Hunt then called on Mr. Robert L. Howsam of Denver, who represents the corporation known as Rocky Mountain Empire Sports, Inc. Mr. Hunt in introducing Mr. Howsam indicated that he had been associated with minor league baseball and was one of the individuals spearheading the third major league for baseball.

Mr. Howsam reported that for five years Denver had been trying to get a National Professional Football League franchise, but to no avail. He indicated that geographically Denver is an excellent location, in that the closest large city to Denver is Kansas City and that the Denver Metropolitan Area has a population of approximately 950,000. He further pointed out that 85% of the commercial distribution for five states was routed through Denver and that Denver holds the minor league record for baseball attendance during the last ten years. Also Denver, as well as the surrounding area, is very interested in football, which is indicated by the fact that the University of Colorado averages 32,000 in attendance for each game. He further informed the group that the Denver Bears Baseball Club has one of the finest stadiums in the country situated on 22 acres of land  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from a freeway; and in addition his group had acquired 48 additional acres within one block of the park, which would be utilized for the purpose of increasing the parking facilities from 3,000 to approximately 9,000. He also told the group that the capacity of the park could be increased eventually to 70,000 and that they could open the 1960 football season with between 30,000 and 40,000. In addition, Mr. Howsam reported that the United States Air Force Academy wants to play its Saturday schedule of football games in the Denver Bears Park.

Mr. Howsam emphasized that Denver is a rapidly growing city, that there is a great deal of building going on and that many influential citizens of the community, the Mayor, the owner of the Denver Trucking Company, former Governor Dan Thornton and others, were interested in bringing a major football team to Denver. He assured the group that the people he represented were ready to commit themselves to the formation of a second major professional football league.

Mr. Hunt then introduced Mr. William Boyer, President of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and Mr. Max Winter of Minneapolis Attractions, Inc. and the former owner of the Minneapolis Lakers, professional basketball team, who were representing the City of Minneapolis.

Mr. Boyer stated that they had a new stadium in Minneapolis, which could be expanded to seat 22,000 people, and in the event major league baseball ever came to Minneapolis, it could seat as high as 35,000 without too much remodeling. He stated that it was designed for both baseball and football alike, and he emphasized that the City of Minneapolis and, for

that matter, the entire State of Minnesota was very interested in athletics, especially football. The Minneapolis-St. Paul area is approximately 1,300,000, and the 161-acre tract of land on which the stadium is located has four-lane highways on all sides of it. He indicated that in addition to himself and Mr. Winter, many other leading citizens, including Mr. Skoglund and Mr. Jack Maloney, who was represented at this meeting by Mr. Spencer Dean, were ready to throw their full support behind the project to bring major professional football to Minneapolis. Mr. Boyer informed the group that it was their plan to make this a civic project and obtain the backing from as many people as possible.

At this point Mr. Howsam advised that in his opinion Minneapolis has potentially the best stadium in the United States, informing the group that it could easily be converted into a triple deck with absolutely no pillars.

Mr. Hunt then called upon Mr. Harry Wismer who was representing New York at the meeting. Mr. Wismer in introducing himself stated that he had been in professional football for over 25 years and that he owns 25% of the Washington Redskins and at one time was one of the three largest stockholders in the Detroit Lions.

He stated that New York is definitely ready for another major professional football team, not only because the area can support more than one team, but because the Giants in his opinion and in the opinion of other sports leaders in New York are on the brink of going downhill as a champion team. He reported that he has a tentative arrangement worked out with the city to obtain the use of the new Flushing Meadows Stadium which will be ready for the 1961 season. For the 1960 season he planned to use the Polo Grounds.

Mr. Wismer stated that he was ready to make a commitment as the New York representative in the league and that although he was acting as an individual at the outset, he would undoubtedly have partners later on, all of whom would be men of high integrity as well as both morally and financially responsible.

Mr. Hunt then stated that Mr. Barron Hilton unfortunately could not be present at the meeting but was represented with respect to the Los Angeles franchise by Messrs. John Monroe, Tom Eddy and Gregory R. Dillon.

Mr. Monroe reported that Mr. Hunt had only spoken to Mr. Barron Hilton about a week prior to this meeting and that Mr. Barron Hilton had not had much of an opportunity to explore all the aspects of operating a professional football team in Los Angeles. He stated, however, that his instruction from Mr. Barron Hilton were to commit Mr. Hilton for the franchise and further advised the group that Mr. Hilton contemplated playing all the games in either the Rose Bowl or the Coliseum. Mr. Monroe emphasized that Los Angeles has become a tremendously enthusiastic city for sports and that Mr. Hilton was very interested in proceeding with the project.

Mr. Hunt then addressed himself to the group and asked if everyone in the room was willing to commit either himself or the people he represented to the formation of the new league. Everyone present acknowledged approval; however, at this point Mr. Rhodes reiterated that he was certain his group would go along; however, he would have to withhold a formal commitment until a later date.

Mr. Hunt then stated that it was now in order to set up the next meeting, which he felt should be very soon. After some discussion it was agreed that the second organizational meeting would be held in Dallas at The Statler Hilton on Saturday, August 22, 1959.

Mr. Hunt then informed the group that between the adjournment of this meeting and the second meeting everyone should be considering suggestions for: (1) Constitution and by-laws, (2) Individual problems and details affecting local areas which should be discussed, (3) Suggestions as to a Commissioner and (4) Such other matters that were of importance in getting the new league launched.

At this point it was decided that between the two meetings Mr. Dillon and Mr. Lathan would prepare an initial draft of the constitution and by-laws, as well as an agreement to be entered into between all of the parties whereby each franchise holder would contribute initially the sum of \$25,000 making a total of \$150,000. These funds would be held in escrow until the constitution and by-laws had been drawn and accepted and thereafter would be utilized for the initial expenses in establishing the league.

It was further agreed by all concerned that in the event it was determined subsequent to the payment of the funds that the group should not proceed with the establishment of the league, the balance of all such money remaining would be returned on a pro rata basis to the franchise holders; however, if less than a majority decided at any time to withdraw subsequent to the payment of the initial \$25,000, all funds contributed by the franchise holders which subsequently withdrew from the league would be forfeited to the league. The agreement would also contain instructions to the escrow holder as well as such other provisions agreed upon between the parties.

Mr. Hunt also informed the group that it seemed to be the consensus of opinion that the name of the new league would be the American Football League unless for some legal reason such name could not be used. Mr. Dillon and Mr. Lathan were instructed to determine, if possible, if the name was available for use, and Mr. Harry Wismer informed the group that he would investigate an organization in New York which supposedly used the name in 1958.

Mr. Hunt then stated that the next matter to come before the meeting was to issue a press release. After some discussion it was unanimously decided that a press release should be prepared for issuance to all of the Chicago newspapers, as well as the wire services and television and radio. The release was written and approved, and a copy of same is attached to these minutes.

There then followed a general discussion of various matters affecting the formation of the league, and special consideration was given to the question of a performance bond. Mr. Hunt, after some discussion, suggested that any further discussion be held in abeyance until the next meeting, at which time the question would again be considered.

Mr. Hunt then called upon Mr. Harry Wismer to report briefly to the group upon certain discussions that he had in New York relative to television coverage.

Mr. Wismer stated that he had a very lengthy and, in his opinion, valuable meeting with the President and Sports Director of ABC-TV. He stated that ABC-TV is extremely interested in working closely with any new professional football league that might be organized not only with respect to

televising games on a sectional basis, but also possibly televising on a network basis the league games played in New York inasmuch as Mr. Wismer felt that because of the lack of any major college football in the New York area, the New York professional team could play its games on Saturday afternoons and televise them nationally.

Mr. Wismer emphasized that ABC was willing to co-operate fully with our group and that he felt very optimistic about the possibility of establishing a very fine relationship with this network. At this point Mr. Winter interjected the thought that we should make no definite decision with respect to television without conferring with other networks. He emphasized that NBC was also definitely interested. Mr. Wismer answered Mr. Winter by informing him that it was not his intention to commit the new league to ABC, and though he felt personally that ABC could work out the best deal; nevertheless, NBC should definitely be considered and further Mr. Thomason of UPI had informed him that they were decidedly interested and would even start their own network and bankroll the televising of games for the new professional football league. Mr. Wismer concluded with the statement that he would report further at the next meeting.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, upon motion of Mr. Howsam, seconded by Mr. Winter, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 o'clock in the afternoon.

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Temporary Secretary