

# SAN DIEGO FREE PRESS

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## Stadium Sabotage — Mayor Faulconer Needs to Resign



Photo by dennis 

Whether you loved or hated the San Diego Chargers isn't important.

What's important is the flagrant public and political breach of trust surrounding the team's departure, as well as San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer's push for the FS Investors/SoccerCity redevelopment to replace them.

This breach of trust is a major concern that all San Diego citizens and NFL fans nationwide should be paying close attention to. It could very well lead to the Mayor's resignation or recall.

On Feb. 22, 2016, the San Diego Chargers and NFL officials met with Mayor Faulconer to put forth a new [Term Sheet Proposal](#) for the development of a new Chargers stadium at the existing Qualcomm Stadium site — perhaps the most antiquated stadium still used by an NFL team.

Despite propaganda to the contrary, the Chargers were interested in remaining in the Mission Valley area of San Diego if a deal could be reached. The new terms were within reason and, at the very least, warranted further negotiation. Nevertheless, the mayor gave it an immediate "no." The rest is history — the Chargers went on to seek a downtown San Diego stadium, the measure failed, and the team has now relocated to Los Angeles.

Fast forward to May 29, 2017, when Jeff McDonald, investigative journalist for the *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, unearthed the bombshell that Mayor Faulconer had been [secretly meeting with FS Investors/SoccerCity](#) since "early" January 2016. The first meeting was held at OliverMcMillan's offices in downtown San Diego, followed by 33 meetings since.

On June 1, 2017, Chargers lead counsel Mark Fabiani responded to my questions regarding this news:

*“Our offer was turned down flat by Mayor Faulconer at a meeting with Chargers and NFL officials at Chargers Park on February 22, 2016. The turndown led us to instead pursue Measure C for a downtown San Diego stadium. We assumed at the time that the quick turndown was a result of the hoteliers telling the Mayor “absolutely not” on the proposed \$200 million hotel tax increase for Mission Valley. This entire situation now makes a lot more sense with the benefit of hindsight, and the knowledge that secret meetings with FS / SoccerCity were going on at the same time the Mayor said he was trying to retain the Chargers.”*

The timeline, coupled with the proposal being “turned down flat,” speaks volumes.

It suggests that Mayor Faulconer and his team were seeking to drive the Chargers out of Mission Valley for the benefit of FS Investors/SoccerCity, unbeknownst to anyone outside of those 34 clandestine meetings. Otherwise, the mayor certainly would have pursued further negotiations with the Chargers — even if just to buy more time.

SoccerCity, it turns out, is a \$4 billion redevelopment proposal by FS Investors for the Qualcomm Stadium property, but it could only proceed if the Chargers vacated it. Per the proposal’s fine print, the redevelopment plan may not even include a Major League Soccer team, even though it is the namesake cornerstone of the sales pitch.

This is not to say that a new Chargers stadium in Mission Valley was a certainty in any way. It would have still needed \$500 million in public funds and a two-thirds vote, and therefore remained an uphill climb. Nevertheless, the Chargers deserved to have their home city of 56 years negotiating in good faith with them.

Jeff McDonald’s investigative bombshell clearly details how Mayor Faulconer — while representing the city of San Diego — negotiated and acted in bad faith on multiple fronts with the Chargers. Most importantly, it demonstrates the mayor broke his explicit promise to San Diego’s voters and taxpayers to do everything in his power to keep the Chargers in San Diego.

With these duplicitous negotiation tactics, the Mayor undermined a highly valued 56-year-old San Diego NFL franchise, put in motion the Chargers departure to Los Angeles, shattered the hopes of thousands of lifelong Chargers fans, inflicted significant job losses on our residents, and negatively impacted our wider local economy.

Moreover, the Mayor is now attempting to railroad San Diego into gifting the very same Qualcomm Stadium — 166 acres of prime city-owned land — to FS Investors for a pittance, while also trying to get San Diego taxpayers to pay \$5 million for a special election to do so. San Diego’s City Council has thus far narrowly blocked approval for this special election, but the mayor and FS Investors will keep trying.

Astonishingly, of all the serious issues facing San Diego under Faulconer’s watch — such as 117 homeless people dying on our streets last year; 54 the year prior — the one and only issue he has chosen to use his veto power to make happen is SoccerCity.

So, what would the mayor gain by torpedoing the Chargers in Mission Valley in lieu of SoccerCity? Has he gone Duke Cunningham on us, thinking he deserves a piece of the public bounty that crosses his desk? We can only really speculate. But it's fair to say leaders don't betray their sacred public trust without significant benefit to themselves.

As with the 34 secret meetings with FS Investors, the truth here will surface as well.

Furthermore, if Mayor Faulconer wanted to explore options for Mission Valley in the post-Chargers era, there is a Request for Proposals (RFP) public process for doing so.

*Mayor Kevin Faulconer may not be the man who lost the San Diego Chargers, but the sequence of events suggests he may be the man who purposefully traded them for the financial gain of SoccerCity and its backers.*

This allows all experienced people and entities such as Tom Sudberry, Michael Neal, Donna Frye, John Moores, Malin Burnham, Irwin Jacobs, San Diego State University (SDSU), University of California San Diego, and everyone else an equal opportunity to participate in a competitive process, leading to broad public buy-in and the best project for the site.

Instead, our mayor took it upon himself to crown FS Investors/SoccerCity, and SDSU's decision to walk away from the proposal says it all.

These are judgments and behaviors befitting immediate removal from office.

If the revelations and public breach of trust are true, Mayor Faulconer will need to promptly resign. If he refuses, we, the citizens of San Diego, need to launch a Recall Faulconer campaign. Simultaneously, a Grand Jury and/or U.S. Attorney investigation should be initiated to get to the bottom of this matter.

We need to find out exactly who the investors and beneficiaries of FS Investors/SoccerCity are, as well as what motivated the mayor and his team to support them to this degree. If the Mayor can legitimately refute the timeline, breach of trust, and associated implications, we welcome the opportunity for him to clear his name from further doubt.

Mayor Kevin Faulconer may not be the man who lost the San Diego Chargers, but the sequence of events suggests he may be the man who purposefully traded them for the financial gain of SoccerCity and its backers.

What are we going to do about it, San Diego?

Additionally, this op-ed — on an issue of significant San Diego and NFL importance — has been rejected by all of San Diego's mainstream media print news outlets. The question is, why?

Should our media be giving our elected leaders the benefit of the doubt in the face of disturbing information to the contrary, effectively protecting them from legitimate scrutiny? Or should our media be speaking truth to power, holding our leaders accountable for their actions, and challenging them whenever and wherever corruption is identified?

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