

Steelers prepare for life after Tomlin

BY WILL GRAVES
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PITTSBURGH — Art Rooney II sensed Mike Tomlin might be ready for a change. Nineteen years doing any job is a long time, let alone in the white-hot spotlight that comes with coaching the Pittsburgh Steelers.

So when Tomlin walked into Rooney's office Tuesday and told his longtime boss he was stepping down after a largely successful run that included one Super Bowl victory, an appearance in another and 19 straight non-losing seasons, Rooney wasn't shocked.

"He was pretty clear about what his intentions were," Rooney said Wednesday as the Steelers began the process of hiring just their fourth head coach since 1969. "We had a great conversation, and I understood where he was."

Rooney described the impetus behind Tomlin's decision as "more family-related than football-related" and stressed the team was "certainly willing to make another run at it next year with Mike."

Tomlin went 193-114-2 in Pittsburgh, tied with Hall of Famer Chuck Noll for the ninth most regular-season wins in NFL history. Tomlin arrived in Pittsburgh in January 2007 as a relative unknown 34-year-old defensive coordinator. He left as the longest-tenured head coach in major North American professional sports with a



Gene J. Puskar/AP photo

Pittsburgh Steelers owner Art Rooney II meets with reporters on Wednesday in Pittsburgh.

resume that will receive strong Hall of Fame consideration of its own, even if he never coaches another game.

Whether that happens is anyone's guess, though Rooney said it was his understanding that Tomlin does not intend to coach in 2026. A future in television, even if it serves as merely a breather before the 53-year-old married father of three returns to the sideline, could be in the offing.

Rooney did not try to talk Tomlin out of the decision, saying instead that the club is "grateful" for the way Tomlin carried himself both on and off the field during what Rooney described as a "winning era" for one of the league's most visible franchises.

That era, however, ended with the Steelers in a rut. Their season-ending 30-6 loss to

Houston in the first round of the playoffs Monday night marked Pittsburgh's sixth straight one-and-done postseason appearance, all of them by multiple scores.

"I can't explain the more recent history there," Rooney said. "It's hard to explain, given the overall track record. Frustrating for all of us, mostly for Mike."

Asked if those playoff failures factored into Tomlin's decision to walk away, Rooney demurred. He also declined to get into specifics about what might happen should Tomlin want to return to coaching in 2027. Tomlin exited while still under team control for two more years, with the club holding the option for 2027.

During the rare occasions the Steelers have found themselves looking for a head

coach, they often have been looking for a certain type. Noll, Tomlin and Bill Cowher were all defensive coordinators in their 30s when Pittsburgh plucked them from relative anonymity. They all left with at least one Super Bowl ring.

It's far too early in the process for the club to start whittling down the field for a job that figures to be among the most coveted of the nine current head coach vacancies in the NFL, considering the Rooney family's track record of giving coaches ample time to find their footing.

"Can I sign up for another Chuck Noll or another Bill Cowher or another Mike Tomlin or somebody that we feel fits that mold? (That) would be great," Rooney said.

Rooney essentially ruled out any of the staff Tomlin left behind — including offensive coordinator Arthur Smith, who has been contacted by Tennessee about its opening — from being a candidate to replace Tomlin, though it's possible they may have an opportunity to stick around in some capacity if they mesh with the new hire.

Whoever takes over will be given the same "the standard is the standard" mandate that Tomlin embraced, though it led to diminishing returns in his final years.

"There will be changes, and we'll have to all get comfortable with kind of the plans," Rooney said. "Whether you call it a 'rebuild' or not, I don't like that

word that much. We'll try to compete Day 1 if we can."

That plan seems unlikely to include Aaron Rodgers. The 42-year-old who helped guide the Steelers to the AFC North title will be a free agent in March, and Rodgers made it clear from the moment he arrived last June that Tomlin's presence was the main reason he signed, a sentiment Rooney echoed on Wednesday.

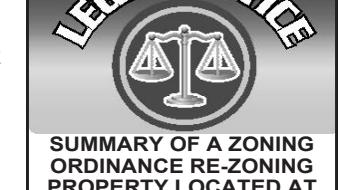
Rooney declined to put a timeline on a potential hire, though he expects it to be before the NFL combine in late February. The Steelers have the 21st overall pick in the draft, which they will be hosting for the first time.

The club has long pointed to the draft as an opportunity to select its next franchise quarterback, something that has proven elusive since Ben Roethlisberger's retirement in January 2022. The discussion about the quarterbacks "will be an important one" when Rooney and general manager

Omar Khan meet with prospective candidates.

Whatever quarterback/coach combination walks onto the field at Acrisure Stadium next fall will be tasked with helping the franchise emerge from a decade of purgatory in which it has been good but not nearly good enough, and do so quickly.

"I'm not going to say, 'Well, we're going to take a couple years to figure this out, and then we'll try and compete,'" Rooney said. "So I think you try every year. Some years you have the horses to really get there, some years you don't. But you try."



SUMMARY OF A ZONING ORDINANCE RE-ZONING PROPERTY LOCATED AT 238 CEDAR OAK DRIVE, VINE GROVE, KENTUCKY, PART OF ARLINGTON CENTER, LOT 3B PVA MAP #138-20-07-003 FROM C ZONE TO R-4 ZONE 8.480 ACRES

The City of Radcliff Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on a zone map amendment request on November 6, 2025 made by applicant/owner Silver Gate Properties, LLC for 8.480 acres of property located on the west right-of-way of Veterans Memorial Parkway US (Hwy 361) at 238 Cedar Oak Drive, Vine Grove, Kentucky (Part of Arlington Center, Lot 3B, PVA#138-20-07-003) (see Deed Book 1182, Page 769, office of the Hardin County Clerk). The request was for an amendment from Commercial zone to Residential-4 (High Density Single-Family and Duplex) zone. The Planning Commission recommended the zone map amendment request be granted, as the request was supported by the evidence of record, the City's Comprehensive Zoning Plan, and applicable law, and the City Council is now enacting an ordinance to change the property's zoning. Please find the full ordinance on the website www.radcliff.org or by contacting the City Clerk at ashley.russo@radcliffky.gov by email.

Read at a meeting of the Radcliff City Council on the 18th day of November, 2025; a second reading was held on the 16th day of December, 2025, and said ordinance was passed and approved on the 16th day of December, 2025.

*/s/ James S. Duvall, Jr.
JAMES S. DUVALL, JR.,
MAYOR
CITY OF RADCLIFF,
KENTUCKY*

ATTESTED BY:

*/s/ Ashley Russo
ASHLEY RUSSO
CITY CLERK*

CERTIFICATION

I, Michael A. Pike, hereby certify pursuant to KRS 83A.060 that I am an attorney licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Kentucky with the law firm of Pike Law, P.S.C., 1000 Johnstown Road, Suite 100, Elizabethtown, Kentucky; that I prepared the foregoing Summary of Ordinance of the City of Radcliff, Kentucky; and that the foregoing is a true and accurate summary of the contents of said Ordinance. Said Ordinance can be examined in its entirety at Radcliff City Hall, Radcliff, Kentucky.

/MICHAEL A. PIKE/

/MICHAEL A. PIKE/

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