

# Bob Mollette

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Councilman

1705 Franklin Blvd.  
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

Phone: 740-353-0099  
email: [mollette@mollette.info](mailto:mollette@mollette.info)  
website: [www.mollette.info](http://www.mollette.info)

Correspondence#: 08-006

February 25, 2008

Trent Williams, Auditor  
728 Second Street  
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

### **Re: Response concerning Sunshine Laws, Budgetary Issues, and Tax Abatements**

In the February 25, 2008 Council Packet I received your feedback and response dated February 19, 2008 in reference to my correspondence #08-003, 004, and 005. I appreciate your effort to inform and explain your position concerning the Sunshine Laws, budgetary issues, and tax abatements. Time is an enormous thief so I will be short and direct.

I understand and agree with your frustration at the lack of discussion on the budget at the February 11, 2008 Regular City Council Meeting. I believe the City must meet their obligations and have additional meetings rather than deliberating in private with the Mayor. The Ohio Revised Code 121.22 (A) requires public officials "to take official action and to conduct all deliberations upon official business in open meetings unless the subject matter is specifically exempted by law." I feel the best decisions are made deliberating in an open meeting which allows for public scrutiny. I do not fear the public; I encourage their participation.

I suggest amending the Rules for the Government of Council to improve and encourage deliberations in open meetings. The following items should be considered:

- Provide for debate prior to a vote on the motion to table an ordinance or resolution.
- Provide for debate prior to a vote on the motion to suspend the three-reading rule.
- Provide rules for the addition of new legislation to the meeting agenda. Council must be vigilant to protect the rights of the public by providing the opportunity to be informed and encouraged to participate.
- Provide rules for citizen testimony with Council at the Work Conference Session. Council should perform fact finding and problem solving in the Work Conference Session.
- Provide policy for broadcasting our meetings on our local government access cable television channel. There are many challenges facing our community and Council must tap the public resource to meet those challenges.

In an effort to provide sufficient time for review, deliberation, and passage I recommend Council require the Mayor to submit the Annual Budget per Section 48 of the City Charter. It requires each year on or before the fifteenth day of November the Mayor prepares and submits a budget presenting a financial plan including the Annual Appropriation Ordinance as described in Section 49.

I reviewed the proposed 2008 Operating Budget and forwarded my questions and comments for resolution in correspondence #07-061 dated December 27, 2007. After the February 11, 2008 meeting I forwarded #08-003 dated February 14, 2008 which listed objections, concerns, and unanswered questions from my previous correspondence. I realize my limitations concerning these issues are irrelevant unless a majority of Council members acknowledge their existence or desire answers.

I value your February 8, 2008 correspondence depicting the actual General Fund Revenues from 1997 through 2007, revised 2008 Projected General Fund Revenue, Enterprise Funds, and Actual Carryover Balances. These revenue reports should raise concern and generate debate for required actions needed to avoid shortfalls and implement proper planning to avoid living from paycheck to paycheck. Again, I have covered these issues extensively and recognize my limitations unless a majority of Council has similar concerns.

I appreciate your suggestions on the process for salary increases for public employees. As stated previously, I believe Council needs to establish consistent salary and benefits for all public employees when approving negotiated collective bargaining contracts.

I appreciate your response, as a member of the Tax Incentive Council, on the question of continuing the one hundred percent (100%) abatement process. I support an evaluation and hope this issue will be discussed in the near future.

If you should have any questions or comments contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Mollette", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Bob Mollette, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward Advocate and Representative on City Council

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cc: Honorable Council Members  
Jim Kalb, Mayor  
Michael Jones, Solicitor  
Jo Ann Aeh, Clerk (Record)