

Bob Mollette

3rd Ward Councilman

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Honorable Council Members
Jim Kalb, Mayor
Trent Williams, Auditor
Michael Jones, Solicitor
728 Second Street
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

Re: Change for our City Government and Municipal Building

Our City government and Municipal Building are both in degraded conditions. I believe both are interrelated and must be repaired collectively. Our City government must provide proper space for employees and citizens to conduct City business. Our City government must be a representative body that reflects the strength of our citizens. I am positive future challenges can be met with informed decision making based on good engineering practices, sensitivity to our taxpayers, and transparent communication.

I believe our City government has lost the trust and confidence of the citizens by their efforts to relocate our Municipal Building offices to another site without first getting the support of the taxpayers. Our City government has stated the current property is just too valuable for City use. Citizens have expressed their belief that their City government allowed the Municipal Building to degrade by their actions and inactions to necessitate this move. I believe our employees and citizens deserve better from their City government.

Our taxpayers question why their City government needs to move from the current Municipal Building. City officials have stated the property can be better utilized and the existing building is beyond repair. Taxpayers have not been given specifics as it relates to property worth or the dollar amount for proper building repairs. I suggest professional advice to identify the costs required to achieve improvements for providing a safe and clean environment for our employees and citizens. Information based on facts could decrease taxpayers concerns and ensure timely results in the future. Keep in mind the citizens expect their infrastructure and assets to be maintained properly by their elected officials.

The City Building Committee (CBC) produced a Final Report on December 11, 2006, which determined the Adelpia Building site would best be utilized as the City Hall complex. This would be accomplished by demolishing the current Adelpia building, purchasing adjoining properties for expansion, and constructing a new Municipal Building complex. The CBC did not have the ability to obtain professional services to support their recommendations and it was anticipated the adjoining properties would be relatively inexpensive to acquire. City Council authorized the Mayor to hire an appraiser (July 30, 2007) and the Mayor reported (August 27, 2007) it would cost \$500,000 to acquire one portion of property needed to build a new Municipal Building. City Council has not been given pertinent property information for proper decision-making. Based on the above information I recommend the City expand their options and include the existing Municipal Building site based on the potential to significantly increase taxpayer costs associated with property procurement to meet our office space and parking requirements. The current Municipal Building site is twice the size of the current City owned Adelpia Building site and has no reported buyers to date. The Marting Foundation should be requested to release appropriate funds to raze the existing building at the Adelpia site to provide for future development.

I recognize the Marting Building and Annex as a liability unless a new owner is identified. The CBC Final Report offered numerous suggestions, which to date has not been accomplished. A new advisory committee, comprised of the Mayor, Auditor, Solicitor, and First Ward Councilman, was formed August 13, 2007 to expedite the process of relocating the Municipal Building and make recommendations to Council when necessary. A member of this new committee was quoted in the Portsmouth Daily Times on October 10, 2007 the recommendation may be to move some City offices into the Marting Building. On January 29, 2008 the First Ward Councilman reported the consensus of the new committee was to recommend the Police Department and Municipal Courts be located in a new building at the Adelpia Building site and recommended some City offices be located in the Marting Building to avoid losing \$1.5 million dollars from the Marting Foundation. I question a proposal to use the Marting Building for City offices because this option was answered by a negative vote of the citizens in May of 2006. Our taxpayers are not convinced maintaining several old buildings is cost effective or provides the best public service option. I recommend if new owners are not located for the Marting Building or Annex then a request to the Marting Foundation should be made to release appropriate funds to raze the existing structures with the goal to provide for future downtown development.

Poor decisions by elected officials will further damage our community's spirit and deplete limited resources. I feel the lack of communication and planning in our community creates an environment unfavorable to positive community spirit and good decision making. I have offered many goals, opinions, and solutions to improve our degraded City government as posted on my website www.mollette.info. I also acknowledge change will not occur unless a majority of Council members' desire it.

I remain optimistic that our challenges can be met with informed decisions, by understanding the problems, gathering the facts, developing a plan, and communicating through open meetings to gain support.

If you have any questions or comments contact me.

Respectfully,



Bob Mollette, 3rd Ward Advocate and Representative on City Council

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cc: Jo Ann Aeh, Clerk (Record)