



JAMES D. KALB
MAYOR

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
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PORTSMOUTH, OHIO 45662

July 10, 2008

The Honorable Robert Mollette
Third Ward Councilman
1705 Franklin Avenue
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

RE: Correspondence #08-027 dated July 1, 2008

Dear Councilman Mollette,

I am pleased that you are familiar with the Jacobs, Edwards & Kelcey Downtown Revitalization Plan for Portsmouth (June 20, 2007). I found the report to be a useful and enlightening tool in shaping ideas, hopes and plans for our downtown area.

I take to heart a few lines from beginning of the JEK report (page 4), which state: *"Plans are successful if they give people a strategy to make something happen, but the Plan is worth only paper if the community's people do not carry it forward... This process is seldom easy, and there will be multiple frustrations."* As we have seen, there have been many frustrations, but I believe the citizens of Portsmouth can and will come together to wholeheartedly support the plan for a City Center and Justice Center.

Now, I am specifically requesting your plan for a paradigm shift in the overwhelming negativity of a small but vocal minority of our citizenry. As you are aware, the JEK addresses negativity. During the Public Vision Open House held on October 19, 2006, citizens were asked, *"If you were King or Queen of Portsmouth for a day and you could do anything, money no object, what ONE thing would you do?"* Not surprisingly, one answer was *"Exile negative people."* How do you propose to address the pessimism and unconstructive dissidence of the few? While we are seeking to "understand the problems associated with these efforts to avoid missing good opportunities...", it is critical that we address short-sighted negativity.

I am certain the citizens of our community are weary of negativity. They no longer want stall tactics, and they no longer want endless conjecture to waste more of our valuable resources and time. They want their city leaders to move ahead with a vision. I do not feel we can afford to squander this opportunity. I will embrace a progressive attitude.



The Honorable Robert Mollette
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I look forward to your thoughts, and I know we both look forward to the citizens of Portsmouth speaking their mind on the ballot in November regarding the City Center and the Justice Center.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James D. Kalb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

James D. Kalb, Mayor
City of Portsmouth

cc: Honorable Council Members
City Department Heads
Trent Williams- Auditor
Jo Ann Aeh- City Clerk
Michael Jones- City Solicitor
David Stone- Tanner Stone Holsinger Donges
Zoe Richards- Director of Main Street Portsmouth
Press Release

JDK/wjj

Bob Mollette

3rd Ward Councilman

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Correspondence#: 08-027

July 1, 2008

Jim Kalb, Mayor
Honorable Council Members
728 Second Street
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

Re: Proposed City Government Office Space and Downtown Revitalization Plan

A healthy and vibrant downtown boosts the economic health and quality of life in a community. Specifically, it creates jobs, incubates small businesses, reduces sprawl, protects property values, and increases the community's options for goods and services. A healthy downtown is a symbol of community pride and history. I believe throughout the City and Scioto County everyone wants to see Portsmouth succeed in these goals. I feel Portsmouth is at a critical crossroad with limited resources, rising operating expenses, and aging infrastructure that requires the right decisions, good communication, and deliberate actions with an overall plan in mind to be successful. The purpose of this letter is to encourage relevant dialogue to provide unified leadership with coordinated efforts and a positive community partnership concerning the proposed City office space and downtown revitalization.

A majority of Council members are proposing renovating the former Marting Building at a cost of \$6,567,667. This space would include City offices on the 3rd floor and potential retail business on the 2nd and 1st floors; the renovated building would be called the City Center. The Municipal Courts and Police Department will be located in a new Justice Center on the former Adelphia Building site (\$6,689,500). The estimated total expense for both facilities is approximately \$12,000,000, which includes a return of \$1,400,000 from the Richard D. Marting Foundation. These estimates were calculated by Tanner Stone Holsinger Donges Architects and recommended to Council by the Advisory Building Committee (ABC). I have requested additional relevant facts within correspondence #08-023 dated June 3, 2008 and #08-024 dated June 11, 2008 (enclosed). It has been suggested these moves provide the ability to attract a developer for a Convention Center to be located on the vacated City property, although no buyers have been identified at this time.

The taxpayer's investment of an estimated \$6,000,000 at the City Center (former Marting Building) might revitalize downtown Portsmouth. A great deal debate without correlating facts has occurred in City Council Chambers and in the media concerning the future of City government office space and downtown revitalization. I am seeking to understand the problems associated with these efforts to avoid missing good opportunities or making poor decisions with our limited resources. I have referenced a report on Downtown Revitalization Plan developed for the City of Portsmouth by Jacobs Edwards and Kelcey (JEK) dated June 20, 2007. The report may be found at the following link: (http://www.ci.portsmouth.oh.us/departments/community_dev/portsmouth_strategic_plan_2007.pdf)

Keep in mind the JEK report (page 4) states "All people interested in the success of downtown Portsmouth should keep one more fact in mind: revitalizing downtown is never the job of the City government. Downtowns need vital improvements and services that only the City government can provide – such as policing, code enforcement, street maintenance, etc. But many of the deepest needs of a downtown – businesses, customers, people – are things that no government can make happen. Every successful downtown revitalization effort is dependent on the long-term commitment of people who work, live, shop, and find entertainment downtown."

The JEK report on the Downtown Revitalization Plan (page 11) expresses caution about one-shot solutions stating *“Although one-shot solutions always sound attractive, they don’t work in downtowns. Like Portsmouth, most downtowns deteriorated for decades before revitalization efforts began, and that deterioration had a dizzying array of causes and impacts. Downtown supporters often want to latch onto straightforward, even simple solutions (such as building a convention center, recruiting a sports team or constructing a shopping mall). These solutions often seem to be attractive because they promise a solution to all the problems through one activity, and in a relatively short period of time. However, one-shot solutions have never worked. Sometimes they replace old problems with new problems, such as when a large development results in more retail space than the downtown trade area can support, and the amount of vacant space downtown skyrockets. Sometimes they hide the old problems for awhile, such as when a glitzy new development attracts visitors out of novelty, but what the development offers is duplicated by retailers in adjoining trade areas (a common situation with basic retail and shopping malls). Unless they are part of a more comprehensive effort, one-shot solutions almost never work as promised. And in the process they usually absorb massive amounts of public and private money and time.”*

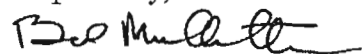
The JEK report (page 12) identifies seven (7) Major Initiatives, Action Plan, Steering Committee Downtown Vision and Concept Areas. It identifies a Master Plan with shared action steps with the Main Street Portsmouth organization and various funding options. The JEK report (page 14) states *“Property maintenance is one of the key responsibilities of property ownership, and it is in the interest of all downtown property owners, as well as the City at large, to hold every property owner to high but reasonable standards. Without better property maintenance, downtown Portsmouth will find it difficult to overcome the continuing negative perceptions of downtown Portsmouth.....In any community, poor property maintenance can result from a variety of factors, including owner negligence, owner’s inability to maintain the property (which can be due to age, lack of funding for improvements, etc.), lack of City enforcement of building and property maintenance regulations, or lack of appropriate enforceable regulations.”*

I am requesting open dialogue with the various organizations to assure myself and the taxpayers the proposed City Center and Justice Center is a workable solution and not a *one-shot* solution.

I am also requesting appropriate five (5) year projections for the Operating Budget, Capital Improvements Budget, and Enterprise Funds. This would provide the ability to properly evaluate available resources and to plan future expenses for maintaining our aging infrastructure.

Contact me if you should have additional questions or comments.

Respectfully,



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

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Enclosure

cc: Jennifer Hanlon, Director of Community Development
Zoë Richards, Director of Main Street Program
David Stone, Tanner Stone Holsinger Donges Architects
Edwards & Kelcey Consultants (895 Central Ave. Cincinnati, Ohio 45202)
Southern Ohio Growth Partnership (SOGP)
Trent Williams, Auditor
Michael Jones, Solicitor
Jo Ann Aeh, Clerk (Record)
Press Release