

Bob Mollette

3rd Ward Councilman

1705 Franklin Blvd.
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

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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 Adelpia 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

Bob Mollette

3rd Ward Councilman

1705 Franklin Blvd.
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Correspondence#: 08-023

June 3, 2008

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

Re: Fact Finding for City Government Office Space

I reviewed the information provided on the proposed City government office space and developed a list of comments, questions, and requests for additional information to better understand the consequence of our actions or inactions.

At the May 27, 2008, Work Conference Session, a presentation was given by Tanner Stone Holsinger Donges Architects of Portsmouth, Ohio for the conceptual design and costs for new City government offices. The conceptual design involved a new Justice Center at the former Adelphia Building site and City Center from renovated offices at the former Marting Building. This concept was recommended by the Advisory Building Committee and supported by a majority of City Council members with passage of Ordinance #15-08 on March 24, 2008. This presentation included an estimated total cost of approximately \$12,000,000 which includes a return of \$1,400,000 from the Richard D. Marting Foundation.

On May 30, 2008, I requested additional data to better understand the basis for the conceptual design and cost. I enclosed the information I received dated May 6, 2008. It appears the Justice Center concept has approximately 30,000 square feet (sf) with a projected cost of \$6,689,500. The City Center concept has approximately 19,000 sf of City government office space and approximately 19,000 sf retail spaces for \$5,167,667 which includes \$1,400,000 rebate from Marting Foundation. It was suggested at the May 27th Council meeting the 2nd floor (19,000 sf) may be renovated at a later time for retail space and the basement may also be renovated at a later date for City storage space. The former Marting Building has approximately 75,000 sf of total available space.

After listening to the May 27th presentation and reviewing the enclosed cost data I feel the best way to accurately solve a problem is by making informed decisions by knowing the alternatives. The City Center concept relies on the taxpayers supporting the idea of providing retail space (up to approximately 35,000 square feet) within the former Marting Building (1st and 2nd floors) and believing this retail space will energize a downtown revitalization. The City Center concept requires a significant investment over and above providing clean and safe office space for our City government. It involves the use of renovation construction which is often difficult to determine the total cost until the construction is complete. Also, an older building is generally less energy efficient with a higher cost to maintain.

To better understand the actual cost of the above concepts I am requesting additional conceptual costs to provide all City government offices at one location under one roof. The Health Department offices will remain in the current Municipal Building Annex.

First, consider the former Adelpia Building site as previously adopted by Council and recommended by the City Building Committee Final Report dated December 11, 2006. Second, consider the current Municipal Building site based on the fact the property is twice the size of the Adelpia site. Third, keep in mind the renovation of the existing municipal building may be the only option available if the electorates do not support the concept of new facilities. I believe it would be prudent and appropriate to provide the above alternatives to the electorate for the best decision. I have listed the following alternatives to summarize my request:

1. Provide a conceptual cost for a new Municipal Building at former Adelpia Building Site.
2. Provide a conceptual cost for a new Municipal Building at existing Municipal Building Site.
3. Provide a conceptual cost for renovation of the existing Municipal Building.

I believe citizens want to be knowledgeable and well informed decision makers. To provide an overall plan the City will have to be clear on the financing. The City Auditor revealed nine (9) sources of revenue in a letter dated May 20, 2008. An article published in the Portsmouth Daily Times (PDT) on May 25, 2008 quoted the City Auditor stating he was going to primarily look at two of them. "An increase in the City Income Tax and/or an increase in the property tax based on real value, not the assessed value." I have three (3) concerns which require additional information to resolve. First, it was stated in the May 20th letter the suggested City Income Tax rate increase would be six tenths of a percent (.6%) with two tenths of a percent (.2%) being dedicated to financing the building project. The remaining four tenths of a percent (.4%) would be dedicated to providing many services and improvements to the City that has long been forgotten. I consider it risky to mix objectives unless adequate information is provided to justify them. Provide the proper documentation on the many services and improvements proposed for the four tenths of a percent (.4%) rate increase. Second, explain the use of the proposed property tax based on the real value instead of the assessed value. The assessed value is thirty five percent (35%) of the appraised value. It appears the real value has the potential for much higher property taxes. Provide additional information for justification to seek property taxes based on real value versus the assessed value. Third, the cost estimate information enclosed indicates a zero (\$0) amount for furniture and states it will be provided by the owners. Provide an estimate for the cost of furniture. I have listed the following requests:

1. Provide the proper documentation on the many City services and improvements proposed for the four tenths of a percent (.4%) City Income Tax rate increase.
2. Provide additional information for justification to seek property taxes based on real value versus the assessed value.
3. Provide a cost estimate for the projected furniture needs.

If you have any questions or comments contact me.

Respectfully,

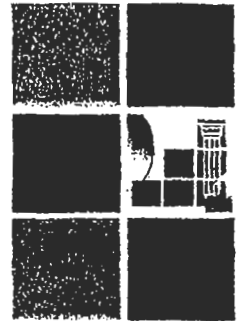


Bob Mollette, 3rd Ward Advocate and Representative on City Council

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Enclosure

cc: Michael Jones, Solicitor
Tanner Stone Holsinger Donges Architects
Jo Ann Aeh, Clerk (Record)



NEW JUSTICE CENTER AT FORMER ADELPHIA SITE

May 6, 2008

Property Acquisition		\$250,000	
Demolition		\$100,000	
Site Preparation/Development		\$250,000	
Furniture (By Owner)		<u>\$0</u>	\$600,000
* Police Department	12,000 sf		
* Municipal Court	12,000 sf		
* Legal Department	1,200 sf		
* Common Area	<u>5,000 sf</u>		
	30,200 sf		
		Use 30,000 sf @ \$175 sf =	<u>\$5,250,000</u>
		Total Construction Cost	\$5,850,000
Architect/Engineering Fee @ 7%			\$409,500
Miscellaneous Costs (Survey, test borings, approval fees, reproduction of drawings, etc.)			\$30,000
Contingency			<u>\$400,000</u>
TOTAL PROJECT COST			\$6,689,500

**TANNER STONE
HOLSINGER
DONGES**

Architecture
Planning
Interior Design

1010 Coles Blvd.
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Mark E. Tanner AIA
David F. Stone AIA
Mark Holsinger AIA
Kirk R. Donges AIA



OFFICES AT MARTINGS BUILDING

May 6, 2008

Property Acquisition	\$0
Furniture (By Owner)	\$0
Site Prep/Development	\$150,000

1st Floor	19,300 sf @	\$78 sf =	\$1,505,400
3rd Floor	18,935 sf @	<u>\$175</u> sf =	\$3,313,625

Building Façade Upgrade	\$500,000
Elevators	\$250,000
Fire Protection	<u>\$175,000</u>

Total Construction Cost \$5,894,025

Architect/Engineering Fee @ 6% \$353,642

Miscellaneous Costs
(Survey, test borings, approval fees, reproduction of drawings, etc.) \$20,000

Contingency \$300,000

TOTAL PROJECT COST \$6,567,667

Rebate from Marting's Foundation ⁴\$1,500,000

NET PROJECT COST \$5,067,667

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3rd Ward Councilman

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Correspondence#: 08-024

June 11, 2008

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

Re: **Paradigm Shift to Represent Citizens**

During the June 9, 2008 Regular City Council Meeting citizens requested answers to their questions pertaining to recent flooding of residential homes, McKinley Pool not opening to the public until mid-July or longer, and additional information on the proposed City government office spaces. If the City received a report card on handling these issues, I believe it would not receive a passing grade. The Mayor offered no report or even a comment on the flooded residential homes or the McKinley Pool issue. I am requesting the support of Council members in encouraging the Mayor to ensure adequate information is disseminated to the citizens. I am documenting my thoughts as a public servant with a desire to modify the way we do public business.

The City Charter describes the duties of the Mayor in Section 34. "Except as provided in Section 5 of this Charter it shall be the duty of the Mayor to act as chief conservator of the peace within the City; to supervise the administration of the affairs of the City; to see that the ordinances of the City and the laws of the state are enforced; to make such recommendations to the Council concerning the affairs of the City as may seem desirable; to keep the Council advised of the financial condition and future needs of the City; to prepare and submit to Council the necessary budgets; to attend all meetings of the Council, but shall have no vote therein; *to prepare and submit to Council such reports as may be required by that body; and to perform such duties as may be prescribed by this Charter or required of him by ordinance or resolution of Council.*"

I have enclosed a City Organizational Chart as a reminder that the top management position is held by the citizens. At the Council meeting several citizens mentioned the City suffers from a lack of two-way conversation between the legislative body representative's (Council) and the citizens. I have suggested in the past a format change to the Work Conference Sessions. This change would provide the public the opportunity to testify in favor of or opposition to the proposed legislation. It provides an avenue for Council to better communicate and represent their constituents, and allow citizens to feel like a part of the solution instead of a victim of the system. I am again requesting support for change.

During the Council meeting many citizens gave emotional heartfelt testimony on how the recent flooding of their residence with raw sewage from existing combined storm/sanitary sewers has changed their lives forever and their perception of City government. The Second Ward Councilman was quoted in the *Portsmouth Daily Times* on June 10, 2008 that "he had sympathy for the residents whose homes were flooded with sewage, but said council was helpless to do anything about it because the issue is currently in litigation." I strongly disagree and feel these words may be perceived as punitive. The City's goal must be to solve this problem and end the ongoing tragedy. I am seeking solutions to resolve this issue in the short and long term, an update on any actions taken or planned with timeline, and information on the City's Long Term Control Plan for Combined Sewer Overflows with timeline.

During the Council meeting citizens expressed frustration with the delayed opening of the McKinley Pool as a result of a renovation project. Due to the lack of communication the citizens identify this delay as poor planning and just not caring about our most valuable resource, our children. I am requesting an update and timeline on the City's plans for renovation with available options and projected opening dates for the pool.

During the Council meeting previous questions went unanswered and additional questions arose concerning the proposed City government building and ordinance. I have enclosed a copy of correspondence #08-023 dated June 3, 2008 requesting information to better understand the consequence of our actions or inactions. I am also requesting any and all correspondence between the City and Tanner Stone Holsinger Donges Architects to become an informed decision maker. Citizens have also expressed anxiety that the proposed ordinance does not have a spending cap. Retail business has expressed concern over the number of available parking spaces. I am requesting an estimate of the number of parking spaces at both building sites (City Center & Justice Center).

If you should have any questions contact me.

Respectfully,



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

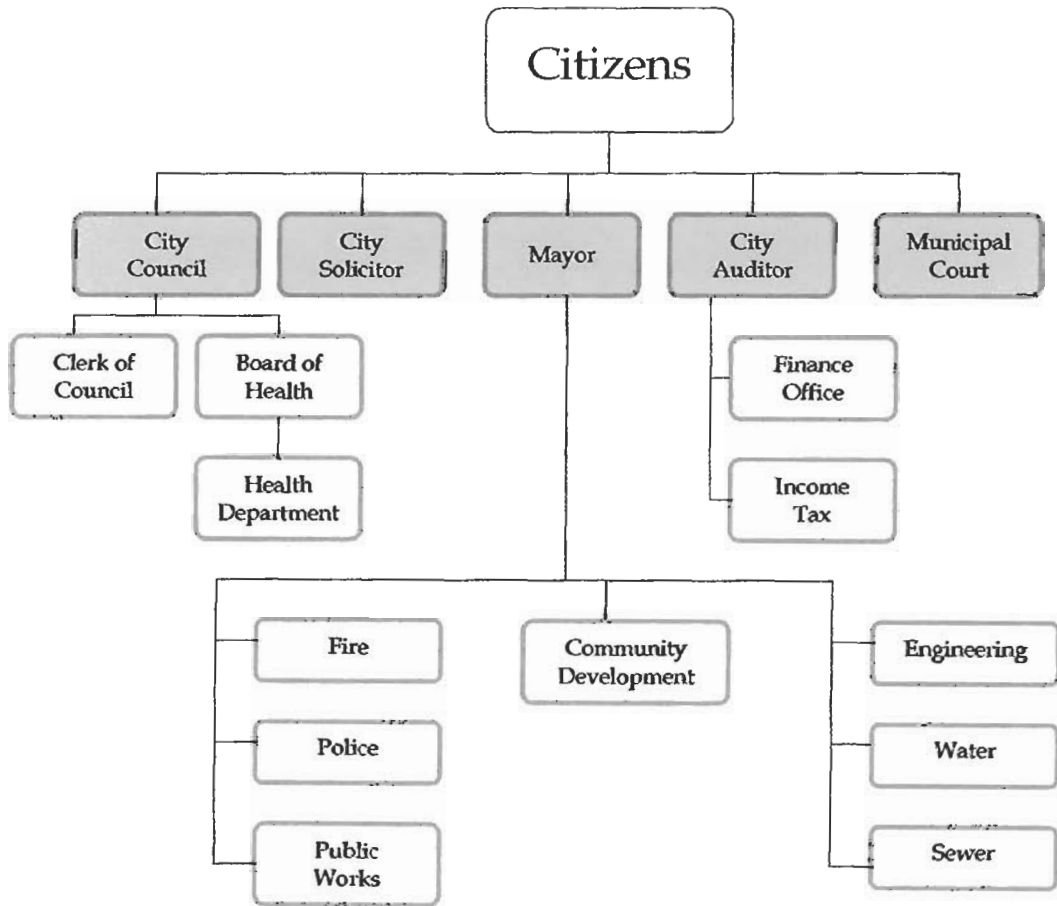
rwm

Enclosure

cc: Trent Williams, Auditor
Jo Ann Aeh, Clerk (Record)

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, OHIO

**City Organizational Chart
For the Year Ended December 31, 2006**



 Elected