



**NB-29**

**Date:** December 6, 2004

**To:** Mayor O'Neill & City Council Members

**From:** Frank Colonna, Council Member, Third District *fc*

**Subject:** Redevelopment Agency Board

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The issues surrounding the possible takeover of the Redevelopment Agency Board by the City Council have galvanized our community's citizens and civic leaders alike.

For decades, we as a City have relied on members of our community to voluntarily serve and provide their time and expertise from a wide variety of disciplines to assist our elected body in better serving the needs of our City. Our founding fathers were very perceptive in realizing that the best balance to maintaining a strong City is the interaction and recommendations from these citizen "think tanks" to our City Council. They recognized years ago this basic form of checks and balances would help the City as a working, productive community.

Our City Council is now struggling with how to deal with a major neighborhood and business enterprise, namely the Redevelopment Agency (RDA) and its Board. We have agreed to hold two study sessions with input from the community, City staff, and hired consultants with their perhaps hurried, recommendations.

Will we be able to come to a well thought out, productive conclusion at the end of three to five hours of City Council discussion? Will we comfortably and objectively understand the complexities of an organization that has operated for decades and produced a major renaissance in some of the most blighted areas of our City?

On the other hand, the agency has not been without problems, and subject to criticism. We have seen a cumbersome RDA process that has struggled to maintain a cohesive interaction between the PACs, the Board, the City Council and their affected districts.

The alternatives, at least for now, seem either to be one extreme or another. We can leave the RDA Board alone, or we as a Council can vote to take it over. What can we do that is not the extreme and yet allow the City Council to play a significantly more active role in the decision making process and still rely on the value of a citizen's form of governance that keeps an appointed RDA Board intact? I would like to suggest the following.

1. The Mayor create a new Neighborhood Redevelopment Council Committee, with three appointed Council members, that will require the RDA Board to report their progress on projects in a systematic and timely manner in order that this committee can then provide a full report to the City Council quarterly on RDA projects undertaken.

2. Empower this new committee to have the ability to make recommendations to the entire City Council on the status of projects in the pipeline. While also creating a vehicle by which any Council Member can request a review of a project's status in any redevelopment area, it can recommend new projects for the RDA Board's merit and review.
3. Streamline the timelines associated with the projects from their inception to their completion in order to establish real time decision-making.
4. Establish a process to assess past projects and their impact whether positive or negative and better connect with the City Council on how to deal with problem areas adjacent to the RDA's geographic boundaries.
5. Explore an avenue of more Council authority and accountability over the RDA Board members. Establish an evaluation process whereby a biannual assessment of RDA Board members and or the board's actions can be the subject of review at the will of the City Council.

We have an obligation to support the integrity of the RDA Board, to continue to work toward completion of the independent study, seek an objective solution to the crisis at hand, and demonstrate to our constituents that we can work constructively toward a solution for the benefit of our entire City, its stakeholders and citizens.

The aforementioned are not set in stone. Many Council Members have expressed their concerns and would like to see a better process developed. I look forward to additional suggestions.

Cc; Gerald Miller, City Manager  
Robert Shannon, City Attorney  
Gary Burroughs, City Auditor