

From: Councilors Stephenson, Crowder and Gaylord  
 To: City Manager  
 Cc: Mayor & City Council

As the three building design and construction professionals on Council, we were asked by fellow Councilors and others to weigh in on the merits and demerits of the CELPSC. As our investigation led from simple questions about amenities and finishes to more fundamental and expensive programming questions about cost and security, it became clear that the most important planning and design questions were not brought to the Council or the public for discussion:

- What are the main programming alternatives to weigh early on, in order to balance the ultimate cost and security of the project?
- Should we include these expensive amenities in the original design?
- How should we deal with cost escalation of 100% between 2007 and 2009?
- How should we resolve serious security concerns reported to staff by security experts in mid-2008?

A timely Council and public debate on these important questions would have prevented them from surfacing now. Unfortunately, as late as last September (Council minutes 9/15/09), Councilors were instructed to hold questions until the design was completed.

Our fundamental objective resulting from our study of this project is not to focus at this time on the process that led us all to this point. These questions should have been vetted by Council years ago. Rather, *our fundamental objective is to get answers that will help us achieve the following criteria for successful resolution:*

**Fundamental Criteria for Success**

- *take advantage of current low borrowing rates and competitive bidding,*
- *meet our most important long-term emergency services needs in a highly secure and cost-effective way,*
- *do not require a tax increase and*
- *do not overshadow other important current and future needs of our citizens.*

**1st Priority: Emergency Functions**

From the information we have gathered to date, we believe the best way to move forward is to thoughtfully evaluate the cost savings of a 'Plan B' low-rise facility in a less vulnerable location, housing the most important emergency functions: 911 Call Center, Emergency Operations Center, Traffic Control Center and IT Server Center. In the current design these are proposed to be housed in 4 floors at the top of a small floor-plate high-rise. The alternate site should be in or near downtown, but provide better vehicular and pedestrian access control to reduce expensive threat mitigation costs. Accordingly, we have asked staff to provide a list of potential city-owned sites (city Council 2/16/10)

## **Police & Fire Headquarters Offices**

The two other primary tenants of the proposed CELPSC high-rise are the Police and Fire Headquarters. Currently, they are in the process of relocating to newly renovated interim facilities on Six Forks Road and Martin Street. We remain concerned about putting all our most important public safety assets in the proposed high-rise (Police and Fire HQs would occupy floors 3 through 10). In addition, the likelihood of a slow recovery from the recession and the expected difficulty of meeting other important citywide priorities that will soon be before us suggest that we study a new headquarters office building in the context of economic conditions and other citywide priorities.

## **Other Citywide Priorities**

Our city needs public transit, bus shelters, road repairs, sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, greenways, sustainable initiatives, cops on the street, promotion of the arts, and economic development. Unfortunately, the City of Raleigh has limited resources. As a result, we have cut funding for our CAT bus system, cut funding for sidewalk construction across the city, cut funding for bike lanes, and cut Police Officer salaries in real dollars in 2009. If we have already stripped these priorities of their funding today, what will happen to them if we take on the additional debt of the most expensive taxpayer-funded building in the city's history?

Below are 6 requests for staff response:

The airplane attack last Thursday on the IRS building in Austin Texas (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/19/us/19crash.html>) only heightens our concerns about putting all our most vital public safety and emergency response assets in one high-rise building. Furthermore, federal standards for the location and design of Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) contradict both the planning and design of the current proposal:

Excerpt from 2008 U.S. Department of Defense document *Emergency Operations Center Planning & Design*:

**“ 3-5.2.5 The EOC should not be located in a high-rise building or next to a high-rise building that can collapse. ...” [1]**

Excerpt from 2007 Federal Emergency Management Agency document *Site and Urban Design for Security*:

**“... options such as the comparative risks (and cost to mitigate) of different locations ... must be subject to analysis and evaluation to enable a comprehensive risk management plan to be developed.” [2]**

The threat assessment consultants hired for this project have told us they were not asked to evaluate different locations, nor were they asked to comment on the wisdom of the high-rise design. It appears, instead, that their scope of work was narrowly constrained to exclude evaluation of potentially less expensive and less vulnerable alternatives.

**(1) Resolution request:** Please address this Department of Defense recommendation against locating EOC facilities in a high-rise building. What percentage of new EOC facilities built in the last 10-years (since the World Trade Tower attack) have been located in high-rise buildings?

**(2) Resolution request:** Please provide all cost management documents produced during the budgeting and design processes for this project, analyzing the cost impacts of locating the EOC functions at a less vulnerable site.

Our Feb 2nd memo quoted the consultant's Threat Assessment Report for this building: **"With both the exterior grounds and the ground floor of the facility open for un-screened public access, the hand-delivery of an improvised explosive device in these areas such as in a backpack or briefcase is a serious concern."** In effect, this building would be less secure from this threat than the existing Police Headquarters. Staff's response to our Feb 2nd memo did not address this concern.

**(3) Resolution request:** Please respond to this Threat Assessment Report concern.

According to Council minutes of 6/19/2007 and the staff estimate of 12/16/09, the cost of this project grew from \$100/sq ft to over \$200/sq ft. between 2007 and 2009. A substantial part of that increase was likely due to 'hardening' of the high-rise structure in response to the Threat Assessment Report of September 2008. Staff clearly took the bomb threats seriously, as the designers told us they beefed up both the perimeter columns and curtain wall against truck bomb threats, and beefed up interior columns against hand-held bombs that could be carried un-screened into the first two floors of the building.

**(4)** Please explain why the cost and security implications of the Threat Assessment Report were not brought to Council for discussion. [This is a *process question* rather than a *resolution question*, but it deserves a straightforward answer at the appropriate time.]

**(5) Resolution request:** Please provide the previously requested city-owned site information.

**(6) Resolution request:** Once a suitable alternate site is selected, have the current design team provide a detailed cost estimate to construct the emergency services program listed above, on the selected site.

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## Conclusions

### 1. Security

We firmly believe that it is not in the best interest of the City of Raleigh or our public safety staff to consolidate all of our most important public safety assets in one high-rise building.

### 2. Cost

We believe our more modest approach will provide both a much safer Emergency Operations Facility without a tax increase, or sacrificing other citywide priorities such as public transit, bus shelters, road repairs, sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, greenways, sustainable initiatives, cops on the street, promotion of the arts, and economic development.

### 3. Moving to Resolution

We believe it is important that we do not leave this important issue for future councils, but instead continue to move forward with a plan to provide for our critical Public Safety needs in a way that meets these *fundamental criteria for success*:

- *take advantage of current low borrowing rates and competitive bidding,*
- *meet our most important long-term emergency services needs in a highly secure and cost-effective way,*
- *do not require a tax increase and*
- *do not overshadow other important current and future needs of our citizens.*

We have proposed one alternative approach to resolution and remain open to any other alternatives that meet these criteria for success.

Russ Stephenson - At-Large Councilor  
Thomas Crowder - District D Councilor  
Bonner Gaylord - District E Councilor

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## References

- [1] *UFC 4-141-04 Emergency Operations Center Planning and Design, with Change 1 (07-15-2008)*  
[http://www.wbdg.org/ccb/browse\\_cat.php?o=29&c=4](http://www.wbdg.org/ccb/browse_cat.php?o=29&c=4)  
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- [2] *FEMA 430 Site and Urban Design for Security (12-2007)*  
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