



UNISON

Advocates for Delaware County's Best Future

August 1, 2010

Ms. Linda Gregory, Member
Muncie City Council
1321 W. University Ave.
Muncie, IN 47303

Dear Linda,

Before I share some thoughts with you, I want to thank you for sponsoring the bond sale ordinance for prospective Tuhey Park improvements. Your leadership, interest and continued pursuit for better offerings at the park are appreciated by so many in our community. Thank you so much.

Attached to this letter is information that you've been presented with before and another that I've yet to provide. I thought going into tomorrow evening's meeting it would be good to have (I've provided the same to those copied on this letter).

As I've shared with you, I have serious concerns about the City administration's interest and ability to carry forth the plan for Tuhey Commons (meaning both Phase I and/or Phase II). It is my belief that the City administration solely seeks to make repairs to the pool leaving the rest of the park as is and that continues the bad math that has rendered the pool over the years a bad investment. We—meaning UNISON—know from our discovery that a very healthy amount of groups and individuals (all income strata) are traveling to both Marion and New Castle's splash parks and that it's the splash park amenities, concession offerings, and safe and clean environment that people and families are looking for.

The reason I believe this is because for twelve (12) months the authors of the plan (UNISON, Muncie Park and Recreation Board, YMCA and others) have been assiduously seeking to meet with Mayor McShurley to ascertain her participation in meetings with other funding sources who stand ready to commit serious monies (multiple entities whose missions and investments mirror what we are seeking to accomplish) to enable not only Phase I improvements but as well Phase II developments that would complete the park in time for Memorial Day 2011. We've had numerous meetings with potential funders over the year, spent real monies gifted by AEP in the amount of \$50,000 for the planning of the project—which the mayor has known about and even requested \$10,000 of to start a park endowment with—and on two occasions had all the ducks lined up only to have the mayor unwilling to meet to leverage the opportunity.

It's as if all of the horses are in the gate ready to race, the stands are full with ready and watching fans and prospective investors are simply waiting to see the gatekeeper pull the chain so that they can confidently invest. The problem is that the gatekeeper's nowhere to be found.

UNISON is a proactive civic organization committed to lending leadership and facilitative energies to engage issues of critical importance to the social and economic well-being of Delaware County.

421 S. Walnut St., Muncie, IN 47305-2459

Only once has the mayor obliged us to meet and where she stated her support of the plan; however, her complete reluctance to meet otherwise speaks otherwise. She insists that we meet only with Superintendent Matt Bailey as she has no time to meet even though this is a stated priority of hers. When asked if we can schedule an appointment she terminates discussions abruptly stating she has no time to allocate to the effort. As you're aware, we've had multiple people make entreaties on our behalf of UNISON and others but she's consistently refused to meet. Of course, at this point Matt will be in England for five (5) months and any diligence to be acted upon will be forestalled to some degree if allowances to communicate are only permitted through Matt's temporary replacement.

I also want to share that a significant amount of work has gone into revenue and operational projections for Phase I and Phase II for Tuhey Commons but we've been unable to share this information with the mayor and others due to lack of access. As I'm sure you and your council colleagues can appreciate, discussing budgets and revenues is not something you do via e-mail or paper correspondence. It's impossible to complete budgets and revenue projections when the mayor, who is the ultimate decider as to what funding sources are to be considered, is unwilling to meet.

It's important to note that acting on plans made is not as easy as obtaining permits and commencing the moving of earth. For the past six months UNISON and Rundell Ernsberger and Associates have been begging to commence construction plans; however, the mayor's unwillingness to meet with us (and Matt Bailey's inability to act due to our same frustration) means that the likelihood of accomplishing Phase I improvements by Memorial Day is fading fast.

Enough said about frustration and disappointment. Rather, allow me to suggest three options to surmount the current impasse:

- A. Vote on the ordinance tomorrow evening subject to the mayor's successful participation in meeting the general design and objectives of the approved plan by the Muncie Park Board. For instance, City Council could request that within four weeks that mayor would report back to City Council to share the disposition of the gathering of support to complete Phase I with a plan to render Phase II complete within two (2) years;
- B. Table the ordinance and request that the City administration and Muncie Park Board and UNISON together convene meetings without delay with the various entities that have earnestly been meeting and awaiting direction from the mayor so that a plan of action can be constructed to render the plan adopted by the Muncie Parks Board. The mayor's participation in such meetings is paramount. Once complete, and to the satisfaction of all concerned, the bond sale ordinance is then lifted off the table for discussion and question; and
- C. Do nothing. This is a legitimate option that has been exercised successfully over the past few years to the detriment of our children, families, and adjacent property owners and that has hindered downtown and business attraction efforts.

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I want to be transparent that if nothing is done then UNISON will engage the Delaware County Fair Board, the Delaware County Commissioners and County Council, and adjacent and applicable institutions for the purpose of investigating the viability of constructing the splash park at the fair grounds. It may be that the City administration and Muncie Park Board find this idea appealing enough to lend support by way of bond sale monies. The County appears willing to seriously consider the same for Tuhey Commons but the mayor has been unwilling to discuss this opportunity for many weeks now.

Regardless of how City Council acts on this matter I believe politics will have little to do with it at the end of the day. Rather it's the City administration's ability or inability to communicate with others *right now* that will be the deciding factor.

The City and the mayor ought not be seen as the victim but rather it is the children, families and economic and community well-being of our community should the City administration fail to act after being literally handed a viable plan of action, methodology to make it happen, and the opportunity to leverage the benevolence of others who have been courted over many months.

I'm sure City Council will have many questions tomorrow evening for the City administration. I've suggested to Matt and the mayor that they come prepared. Members of UNISON and MAPS will be present and I'm happy to answer questions. However, if there's a tinge of angst in my voice its only because I've had the honor to work with some very smart, kind and altruistic citizens and organizations that have stood ready for the better part of a year now with cash, time and patience to accomplish something very much needed and quite special.

Again, I thank you for you being one to lift high this opportunity and your colleagues on City Council who share the same conviction that we can do better at Tuhey Park.

Blessings,



J. Andrew Dale, Chairperson

Attachments

Cc: Mike King, President
Alison Quirk, Vice President
Mary Jo Barton, Member
Mark Conatser, Member
Jerry Dishman, Member
Brad Polk, Member
Sam Marshall, Member