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March 6, 2017

County Executive Chris Abele  
Milwaukee County Courthouse  
901 North 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 306  
Milwaukee, WI 53233

**Michael Mayo, Sr.**

**County Board Supervisor,  
7th District  
Chairman, Transportation,  
Public Works and Transit**

Dear County Executive Abele:

Recently, Jeremy Theis, Director of the Facilities Management Division, provided the Committee on Transportation, Public Works and Transit with the final Phase II report related to the Milwaukee County Court House Project. The report identifies four scenarios in which various county departments would be relocated into one of three new areas: the renovated Historic Courthouse; new building(s); and, the new Criminal Courthouse.

The report is accompanied by an informational report in which Director Theis states that “[t]he project is at a critical state in terms of strategic direction. ... Discussions regarding project delivery methods, building aesthetics, or zoning should not detract from developing a Master Space Plan...” The informational report further requests action on File 16-673, which directs that the Public Safety Building be demolished and a new Criminal Courthouse constructed in its place.

While we appreciate the urgency expressed by Director Theis in the Phase II report and in his informational report, many of the most important aspects of the proposed plan remain unanswered.

First, financing for the plan will not be discussed until Phase III of the project; however, Phase II and File 16-673 recommends that the Board approve the demolition of the existing Public Safety Building and the construction of what would presumably be a \$200+ million dollar Criminal Courthouse. It seems imprudent to approve the demolition and replacement of the existing Public Safety Building without first understanding whether the county and its taxpayers are in a position to support such a project financially. Furthermore, it is unclear how the Advisory Committee could make educated recommendations about utilization and space needs in Phase III without first understanding the costs associated with each proposed scenario.

Secondly, although Director Theis’ informational report promises that “there are no plans to sell or lease” the Historic Courthouse or any of the buildings housed in Clas Plaza, such assertions are meaningless at this stage. Naturally, since discussions regarding project financing, which, presumably would include discussions about whether to sell or lease buildings located in Clas Plaza, are not scheduled to occur until Phase III, there are no *current* plans to sell or lease the buildings. However, current plans (or lack thereof) do not inoculate against future plans, such as those which may occur as part of

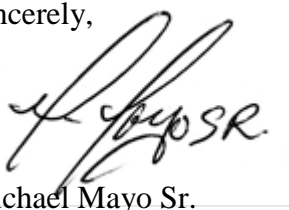
Phase III of the project. Moreover, the fact that the Abele Administration did not request that Clas Park be rezoned to parkland tends to raise further suspicions about the Administration's desire or intent to sell or lease some or all of the complex to a private third party.

Finally, neither the Phase II final report, nor Director Theis' informational report adequately discuss the decision-making process that will be used during Phases III – V of the project. For instance, there is no discussion as to whether departments or other stakeholders not represented by the Advisory Committee will be allowed to offer input as to their preferred scenario. Nor is there any discussion about whether the public will be allowed to provide input as to cost, building design, or other community needs. Input from stakeholders and the public is crucial to ensuring that the plan actually represents the needs of the residents of Milwaukee County, not just the desires of its bureaucrats.

Prior to approving File 16-673 or authorizing Phase III of the plan, we request that you provide: (1) information as to whether discussions related to selling or leasing any part of the Courthouse Complex will occur as part of Phase III; (2) information as to the process that will be employed to solicit and encourage input about the plan from stakeholders and the public; (3) an update as to whether you support moving this project forward; and (4) your recommended funding source, taking into consideration your Budget Director's projection of a \$50+ million budget gap in 2018.

I formally invite you to present your responses to these questions to the Committee during its March 8, 2017 meeting. Should you require clarification or additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at your Convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Mayo Sr.", enclosed in a rectangular box.

Michael Mayo Sr.

Chairman, Transportation, Public Works and Transit Committee

Cc: County Board of Supervisors