

Public safety is the standard by which all communities are judged, and clearly is the most important issue facing our city right now. Over the last several decades, numerous studies have been completed to assess our current jail and court facilities, and to plan for new facilities and upgrades. Now the City-County Council is being asked to approve an extremely complex, public-private partnership to build a \$1.7 billion Justice Center Complex—with a 35-year mortgage—here in Marion County in the next two months.

Mayor Greg Ballard deserves credit for taking action on a number of important public policy issues during his tenure as mayor, not the least of which is his effort to improve our criminal justice facilities. It has never been a political question for the Mayor or his team, but rather a question of what is best for the citizens of Indianapolis. They have taken a non-traditional course and entered into discussions with various business interests to provide a plan to design, finance, construct, and operate a new Justice Center Complex.

The Complex would include space for many local criminal justice operations including a new jail, criminal courts, and community corrections. The idea is to take advantage of cost savings associated with transportation, technology and co-location of key offices.

There are still many significant assumptions associated with these forecasted efficiencies. There must be stronger transparency with elected officials, providing us with the opportunity to review, test assumptions, and ensure projected costs saving are accurate. The folks involved in putting the plan together certainly have the best interest of the City in mind, but open access to information is imperative.

As local officials who represent your interests, it's our responsibility to make sure promises made today don't turn into public safety pitfalls and tax increases tomorrow. An appropriate vetting process requires time and transparency. We do not yet have all the information necessary to determine whether this project will meet our long-term public safety needs, nor the impact it will have on the surrounding neighborhood and Downtown.

We acknowledge the pressing need for a modern jail that can house inmates more efficiently, and are committed to working together with the Mayor, Clerk, and Sheriff to find a sustainable solution. But it would be irresponsible for us to act on the current timeline without knowing more.

There is one thing we do know, and that is, this issue is not and should not be about politics. We believe the best way to keep politics out of this debate is to postpone any final action until after the municipal election if possible. We do not know which party's candidate will prevail, but we know we will elect a new Mayor in November. That person must have an opportunity to review, provide input, and align with this decision. This small but important delay will give us adequate time to go back to gather and analyze the necessary information, and to determine whether this proposal meets our long-term public safety needs in a fiscally-responsible manner.

If it does not, we will work together on an alternative plan that brings all of the stakeholders to the table. The Council has hired an independent firm to review the numbers in an effort to

validate proposed savings and we both support this process. We have to get this right. And, with so much money at stake, we simply can't afford to get it wrong.

Respectfully,

Hon. Benjamin Hunter, Council Member, District 21

Hon. Mary Moriarty Adams, Council Member, District 17