

Edwards,Michelle

From: Todd Nation <booknation@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 2, 2020 1:11 AM
To: Elliott,Earl; Crossen,Martha; Auler,Amy; DeBaun,Curtis; Neil Garrison; Boland,Tammy; Azar, George; Loudermilk,Cheryl; Nation,Todd
Cc: Edwards,Michelle; Bennett,Duke A; Witt, Steve; Brian Conley
Subject: *Ext!* Re: Y ABATEMENT MEMO

****External Email - Think Before You Click****

- Helpdesk

Hello fellow City Councilpersons,

I offer the following comments on Earl's recent Y Abatement Memo, which we received last week.

As a person with a lifelong interest in saving and celebrating Terre Haute's architectural history, I believe the Old YMCA is worth fighting for. Like many of the best historic buildings we have left, the Old YMCA is downtown, in my council district.

When I was elected councilperson, I was proud to be part of a city government that was using the tools offered by our partners in state and federal government to effect positive change here. Back then, Terre Haute's Urban Enterprise Zone funded important work that saw the vacant upper floors of downtown buildings turned into housing. There was a program that helped property owners fund facade restorations. The Enterprise Zone funded downtown parking initiatives, festivals and planning efforts.

Terre Haute no longer has an Enterprise Zone. Although city government continues to offer some of its past programs, the fact is there have been fewer dollars and fewer avenues to get important projects done in the years since we opted out of the state Enterprise Zone program. We still need incentives, though.

The dwindling number of tools that local government has to incentivize worthy projects results in admittedly imperfect proposals like the abatement we are considering for the Old YMCA. Earl has a point about this project only creating one job after it has been built. However, there is a demonstrated need for quality affordable housing in Terre Haute, which this project would help address. That alone is worth investing in.

I also agree with Earl that the scoring criteria need to be updated. For perspective, I remember when we didn't have a scoring sheet at all, and we relied on the representations made by our DOR staff. Although the scoring sheet has not turned out to be a "one size fits all" tool, I'm still grateful that we have it in place to give us a basis for comparison. It is an advisory tool, which each of us weighs when we cast our vote.

The council has discussed the need to update our current scoring sheet multiple times over the years, usually when a councilperson strongly disagrees with granting a tax abatement for a specific project. I still agree that there is room for improvement, and I will volunteer to serve on a committee that proposes updates to the scoring sheet, if such an effort is undertaken.

The funds administered by our Department of Redevelopment are often brought to bear to encourage projects to happen throughout the city. DOR staff are called upon to be creative, flexible and trustworthy when

representing “what local government can do” for prospective developers. They have a tough job, trying to orchestrate and encourage things politicians all say we want: investment and jobs in our community.

Tax abatements have been a subject of debate for the whole 16 years that I’ve held my council seat. It is rare for a proposed abatement to require us to give up so few tax dollars to land a \$10 million project. It is also rare to have the repurposing of a high-visibility local landmark building hanging in the balance, with a reputable company like Commonwealth already so heavily invested and itching to start construction.

The fact that this proposal will provide 40 units of quality affordable housing for our citizens is enough to garner my support. Saving and celebrating the Old YMCA building would be the icing on the cake. Please join me in helping our community win this one.

Sincerely,

Todd Nation
City Councilperson, 4th District
mobile 812-870-4986

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On May 27, 2020, at 10:48 AM, Elliott,Earl <Earl.Elliott@TerreHaute.IN.Gov> wrote:

Council Members, Please open and read the attachment before our next meeting. If have any questions, comments, concern, please share them or bring them up at the meeting. Thanks, Earl

Michelle, Please forward to Tammy and Cheryl. Thanks, Earl