

07 September 2010

To:
Mayor Joe Jaworski

Cc:
City Council

Re: City Leadership?

Mr. Mayor:

The Founding Fathers gave us a Constitutional Republic, because they were well aware of the problems inherent with democracies. For this reason, they would not support governing by referendum, or by the latest opinion polls, but their system did intend for elected "representatives" to actually "represent" the prevailing views of their constituents, and not some entirely different viewpoint.

Based on my unscientific survey of feedback from voters in every district, in the City, the vast majority do NOT want any further expansion of public housing on the Island. The people that I talk to, and correspond with, represent a broad spectrum of political philosophies, and yet they are singled minded in their opposition to an expansion of public housing beyond the current 410 public housing units! To be more accurate, I have not talked to one person who agrees with what the GHA wants to do! Obviously, a scientific poll would yield some support for the GHA plan, but it could easily be as low as 5-10%.

This public sentiment raises the question of why an unelected, totally unaccountable board of five people is being allowed to dictate the future of this city while the Council stands idly by.

Surely Council is hearing essentially the same message from the people as I have. If you know what people want, why aren't you acting to bring about the change in direction that they desire? Where is the leadership from our seven elected officials? What are they doing to save this city from its most destructive impulses?

There are always some officials that feel that once they are elected, they can pursue their own personal political agenda, regardless of whether it deviates dramatically from the prevailing views and desires of their constituents. This type of "representation" always results in disastrous government.

Do some of our current Councilmembers fit into this category?

The only way to clarify whether our City Council is representing the will of the people, or their own personal political agendas, is to ask each of them to answer one simple question; yes or no: Do you support the expansion of public housing in the City of Galveston by allowing GHA to build new units or rehabilitate existing housing stock? Those who do confess to supporting the expansion of public housing are encouraged to detail their reasons why; which should make very interesting reading!

"I believe that the Conciliation Agreement forces the City to rebuild the 569 destroyed by Hurricane Ike or forfeit other federal funding" is NOT an acceptable answer to the question posed above! Anyone who truly believes this allegation should be fighting to get the Conciliation Agreement changed, because, if this is the case, YOUR CITY was swindled by the parties who drafted this Agreement and made it the dumping ground for public housing in Southeast Texas. How does anyone who believes that the Agreement forces YOUR CITY to rebuild the 569 units sit idly by while the rest of the cities in the State have no such requirement? Is this leadership?

The people of this city have endured the burden of hosting public housing for 70 years, and they don't need GOP studies to tell them that public housing has drained the City treasury, had a

negative impact on the social fabric of the City, and has been a big factor in Galveston's decline. Mere observation and common sense is all it takes to understand what has happened.

When the people learned that, before Hurricane Ike, Galveston had more than five times the national average number of public housing units per capita, while the rest of the County refused to host this program; they were OUTRAGED! When the GHA proposed to recreate this density, and then increase it even further; they were OUTRAGED AGAIN! When they heard that Galveston was ALLEGEDLY the only city in the State being forced to build public housing in order to receive other federal recovery funding their OUTRAGE could not be contained!

Now the people want to know why their City Council isn't just as outraged and fighting for their city. Where is their leadership?

Drilling down.

The feedback I am getting on your appointments to the GHA Board is also running strongly negative. Who are these people? How were they selected? The voters don't see them as being concerned with the general welfare of the City. They seem to have been selected for the sole purpose of supporting and pushing through GHA's expansionist agenda, regardless of the wishes of the voters, and no matter what the cost to the City. Why would you select people with this agenda?

Shortly after I sent my letter to you on Friday 03 September, I received the following email:

569 PH units

● jdennis@ghatx.org

To: gogp@att.net

**The 569 units of public housing will be rebuilt.
Sent via BlackBerry by AT&T**

What am I to make of this message from one of YOUR COMMISSIONERS? What does this mean? It seems that Commissioner Dennis is trying to tell me that no matter what the people of this city want, the GHA Board has the power and political muscle to cram these 569 units down our throats! Such is the nature of an unaccountable board as it runs roughshod over the City. The future of the City be damned! Is City Council outraged by this behavior? Where is your leadership?

Is it any wonder that public sentiment is running so high in favor of dissolving the GHA? If it is not abolished, the future of this City will largely be dictated by their Board of five unelected unaccountable Commissioners. Since there is no evidence that your commissioners intend to rein in the GHA's expansion plans, your appointment of the controlling vote on the current Board has not improved matters.

City Council should stop asking IF the GHA can be dissolved; and start asking what must be done to disband this rouge agency. This is the kind of dynamic leadership that we need!

Did someone go to HGAC and make a backroom deal to have some of the money earmarked to rebuild the 569 public housing units sent directly to the GHA, eliminating any possible control and oversight that Council may have had over this process? Such a backroom deal would not be necessary if the City is operating under a mandate to rebuild these units. If anyone did broker a deal, they obviously didn't believe that the City is under a rebuilding mandate, so they would want the decision on whether or not to rebuild to rest with GHA, and not Council, which should confirm the fact that the Commissioners have absolutely no intention of limiting GHA's expansion plans!

Why isn't a discussion of and inquiry into this possible backroom deal on the Council agenda? The people need to know if this happened, and if it did; who is behind it. Why isn't Council outraged over the fact that they have been bypassed in the process, and committed to reversing this travesty? That would show some real leadership!

Mr. Mayor, the way that you and the rest of City Council have reacted to the controversies arising out of the push to rebuild public housing in this city, even as it is rejected by the rest of the County, shows a decided lack of leadership! Sitting idly by while the GHA Board pursues a future vision for the City that the voters do not want, State agencies make a deal with hostile non-profits that may single out Galveston as the only city in Texas forced to act against its own self interest, and a deal was made to bypass and circumvent our elected representatives all demonstrate a passive acquiesce to events as opposed to real leadership.

The only reason that the voters allow this to continue is the City's long history of weak leadership that has created a passive and apathetic populace. We can only hope that as the people's outrage grows, they will be awakened to demand something different, and Council will be forced to lead or get out of the way!

*In 1550, Frenchman Étienne de La Boétie posed the central problem of political theory: **why in the world do people consent to their own enslavement?***

*Later, Libertarian Murray Rothbard described it as "the mystery of civil obedience. **Why do people, in all times and places, obey the commands of the government, which always constitutes a small minority of the society?**"*

*"every tyranny must necessarily be grounded upon general popular acceptance. In short, **the bulk of the people themselves, for whatever reason, acquiesce in their own subjection.**"*

[The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude](#). By Étienne de La Boétie

David Stanowski
President
Galveston Open Government Project, Inc.