January 6, 2021

Dear Citizens of Jacksonville.

 As we near the vote Thursday on Lot J in the Committee of the Whole, I am deeply concerned that our City Council is poised to make a mistake of historic proportions, a decision that will severely erode the public's ability to trust this Council's decisions.

We now have a clear picture of the extent of the deceit, concealment, rigged process, players, and the administration's involvement in the attempt to sell JEA. Astonishingly, it is the same people behind the lopsided deal on Lot J, using the same tactics of secret negotiations, taking the process out of established channels, twisting arms, and pushing to speed up the approval process.

How can we possibly, in good conscience, vote on the future of Lot J just days after the Special Investigative Committee report demonstrated in documented detail that the JEA sale attempt was bred in secrecy and born behind closed doors?

The deal on Lot J needs to be renegotiated by people other than those who backed and supported selling the JEA. Lot J was hatched from the same tortured procedures that ignored, skirted, and waived all institutionalized norms to protect taxpayers.

Selling JEA was cloaked in the false threat that it was the only way to save the utility. Today, we are told the only way to keep the Jaguars in Jacksonville is to swallow the Lot J deal with a return of only 44 cents on the dollar, a $65 million no-interest breadbox loan, and without financial analysis or market study.

Too many questions are unanswered, and taxpayers have been ignored. Is it any wonder the public has lost faith in the Lot J proposal?

Growing up, I was taught trust must be earned. Frankly, and unfortunately, it has not been earned here.

The process has to start over, in the sunshine, in full transparent public view. Start over so we can have a Lot J deal we trust and a Lot J development that will make us proud. Begin again, and, this time, treat citizens as stakeholders, not as an unimportant inconvenience.

As Chair of the Finance Committee, I urge that the bill on Lot J be tabled until it has gone through the proper Downtown Investment Authority process, including financial analysis and feasibility study.

I love the Jaguars, I want a world championship football team in Jacksonville. I want a world-class development to support the Jaguars, but right now, we have neither.

Sincerely,

Matt Carlucci

Council Members: Please do not respond as this is a one-way communication in accordance with the Sunshine Law. Approved by COJ Ethics Office and COJ General Council.