



April 26, 2010

Central Canal's Future An Unanswered Question on Water Utilities Sale

On April 20, 2010, I attended the final scheduled public meeting on Mayor Ballard's proposed sale of Indianapolis' water and wastewater utilities to Citizens Energy Group (Citizens). During the presentation the Mayor reviewed several aspects of the proposed deal and responded to written questions from the attendees. What struck me was how limited the information about the details of the deal were in the presentation. For example, never during the presentation was it mentioned that the Central Canal is part of the sale. After the meeting I confirmed with a senior leader from Citizens that the Central Canal was part of the sale and I briefly discussed it with the Mayor at a community event on April 23, 2010.

The Central Canal is a critical backbone to Indianapolis neighborhoods from Broad Ripple to 30th Street and to the long-term viability of our downtown. When I asked the representative from Citizens if his organization was prepared to be a partner to these neighborhoods and to essentially be in the "neighborhood development" business, I received a non-committal response of future neighborhood association meeting participation.

The future of the Central Canal under the control of Citizens is an important question, and it is concerning that the shift in ownership is not widely known and has not been communicated to neighborhood groups. It is my strongly held belief that important policy decisions in our city must be conducted in a completely transparent way, with the risks made very clear. I do not believe that the city has done enough to engage the public on the risks of the deal, including the future of the Central Canal. Due to these concerns, I renew my call, first stated in my position statement published on my website on April 12, 2010, to follow a more engaged process to include:

- The Mayor's Office should disclose all the details of the deal on-line.

- An independent, outside analysis of the pros and cons should be commissioned. (The Waterworks Board recently made such a request to the Indiana Regulatory Commission. Why wait? The city can commission such a study right now.)
- After the risks of the deal are known, the Mayor's Office should set an aggressive schedule of community meetings across our city and give neighbors the opportunity to provide real input. The Mayor's Office should "meet the people where they are" by sending representatives to every established neighborhood association meeting.

Without full disclosure and an informed public I do not think that neighbors across Indianapolis have the information they need to make a thoughtful assessment of the deal. I recently attended a meeting held by the Indy Connect partners on the future of public transit in our city and region – it was their 32nd meeting with more on the schedule and additional public meetings to follow this fall. Considering the scope and importance of the water utilities sale – called by the Mayor a "once-in-a-generation" opportunity – I don't see why this decision should be treated any differently.

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