



April 12, 2010

On March 10, Mayor Ballard proposed the sale of Indianapolis' water and wastewater utilities to Citizens Energy Group (Citizens). In his press release, the Mayor called the deal a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity and provided a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) his office negotiated with Citizens. To date, this is all the information that has been provided to the public on the deal. It leaves serious questions, including whether the amount of upfront revenue the sale would generate is an accurate number. Beyond this, the process used by the Mayor to negotiate the sale was behind-the-scenes and non-public.

If the deal with Citizens is, as the Mayor states, truly a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity, then, in my view, the next steps should be clear – our city needs a reasoned and thoughtful discussion that includes full disclosure of all the details of the deal, an outside independent analysis, and a community-wide conversation where the input of the public can truly be felt and considered.

It is not overstating the case to say this is one of the most important deals ever proposed in Indianapolis. This is not a lease, it's a sale - so before we “sign on the dotted line,” I firmly believe that the public should have access to all the details that are in the fine print - the hundreds of pages that lawyers and accountants have put together.

To move forward I propose:

- The Mayor’s Office should disclose all the details of the deal on-line.
- The risks of the deal should be made transparently clear – for example, what happens if the future interest of Citizens does not align with the future needs of Indianapolis’ residents and businesses?
- The Mayor’s Office should set an aggressive schedule of community meetings all across our city. Literally, the Mayor and Citizens should commit to have representation at every single neighborhood association

- meeting in the city, present the detailed analysis, discuss the pros and cons, and give neighbors the opportunity to provide real input.
- An independent, outside analysis of the pros and cons should be commissioned.

To his credit Mayor Ballard has set a series of public meetings – I look forward to attending the meeting set for April 20 – but I do not believe these meetings are enough, and I’m not convinced the door is open to other options. Without full disclosure and an informed public these meetings cannot generate real input and guidance on the structure of this deal. We must remember that this deal is permanent. Years from now, when we turn on our faucets, or get our water bill and find there is a problem, who will be accountable? How will the city be able to fix a problem when it has no authority over its utilities? We can only answer these questions and the many more that neighbors have posed through a process that respects the idea that we all deserve to have a seat at the table as well as a voice in the discussion. A “once-in-a-generation” opportunity deserves nothing less.

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