

"DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME"

MAYOR ELLIOTT, DEPUTY MAYOR THALMANN, AND CITY MANAGER HERRON recently expressed their support for this MOU with claims of "Outside Investment, Free Enterprise, Economic Development, Local Jobs, and Open Competition"

What they haven't disclosed includes the following inconvenient truths about who is really "footing the bill" – **YOU MIGHT WANT TO HOLD ON TO YOUR WALLET!**:

1. Construction plans for the remodel of OVMC space in question are currently out for cost estimates. **These costs, to be paid by CITY TAXPAYERS, exceeds \$1.5 MILLION.**
2. City leaders plan to charge ZERO (0) PERCENT INTEREST on this lease and buildout. **The estimated lost revenue and loss of investment interest to CITY TAXPAYERS is many thousands of dollars annually.**
3. The MOU, already signed by City Manager Herron, requires NO MONTHLY PAYMENTS FOR THE FIRST YEAR. **The estimated cost to CITY TAXPAYERS is \$20,000 per month or \$240,000 in Year 1.**

These undisclosed costs are in addition to the \$50-\$100K in utilities & other charges that **CITY TAXPAYERS are already paying PER MONTH** on the OVMC property.

***** THE ESTIMATED UNDISCLOSED YEAR ONE DIRECT COSTS TO WHEELING CITY TAXPAYERS IS APPROXIMATELY \$2 MILLION! *****

Colleges nationwide are struggling to meet enrollment goals. COVID has made this even more difficult.

This MOU creates a Wheeling – BSC joint venture at OVMC, subsidized by Wheeling Taxpayer dollars, one block from Northern, and in direct competition with TWO WV State Taxpayer-supported institutions: Northern & WLU.

In other words, our Wheeling City Tax dollars will be used to subsidize the **POACHING** of Northern, WLU and WU students, costing local colleges enrollments, revenue, and possibly local jobs. This scheme actually positions Wheeling City tax dollars in direct competition with WV State tax dollars – one block apart!

This doesn't sound like "Open Competition" or "Free Enterprise" to me Mr. Mayor.

PEELING THE ONION -- WHAT WE HAVE DISCOVERED, TO DATE:

1. The Mayor and City Manager created a "Friends and Family" plan just for their ethically challenged and politically connected friend, Robin Capehart:

- 1) ZERO down payment
- 2) ZERO interest
- 3) ZERO payments for 12 months

So, now we know who the "Friends" are. But who qualifies as "Family"? [pause]

2. The Deputy Mayor puts the "Family" in this "Friends and Family" Scheme:

Deputy Mayor Thalmann...Perhaps you should disclose for your City Council colleagues and WHEELING CITY TAXPAYERS that **ROBIN CAPEHART is your UNCLE!**

- Did you disclose this little family connection prior to the Jan 5th signing of the MOU?
- Or maybe when you entered Executive Session with the Mayor and City Manager to meet with your Uncle...out of public view?
- Or perhaps you recused yourself from voting on this \$2M "Friends and Family of Robin Capehart" scheme? But, the Jan 5th City Council vote, captured on video, was unanimous, which means you casted a voted.

3. Wheeling residents and City Council members have been deliberately gamed and misled by "Friends and Family" members:

- You heard right, this "Friends and Family of Robin Capehart" scheme includes **full access to our trusted Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and City Manager in Executive Session and at other times for the past four plus months, OUT OF PUBLIC VIEW!**
- This trio then dragged City Council members into their scheme (unknowingly) providing Robin Capehart endless time to pitch this scheme in private session and without any of today's revelations on the table.
- Local college leaders read about this scheme for the first time in the Intelligencer on January 6th – like most of you did – and **after the MOU was signed**. Then, when the

colleges raised serious concerns directly with the Mayor all we get is three minutes to express our concerns on City Council's public agenda today.

- Then the colleges are publicly admonished by "Friends and Family" members in the press for raising legitimate concerns with this scheme. "If you can't attack the message, attack the messenger" ...right?

4. The Mayor and City Manager have not done the required due diligence – their quotes in the local press indicate that their minds are already made-up.

1. Despite the appearance of this MOU -- to conduct a feasibility study -- there is no process in place to gather data in order for City Council members to make an informed decision. Despite claims to the contrary in the media, the Mayor and City Manager have conducted no due diligence, no Feasibility Study, no analysis of costs and benefits, no attempt to determine, share, and debate the pros & cons with City Council.
2. No one contacted our colleges or anyone else to fact check in order to determine IF local STATE-SUPPORTED colleges already offer Manufacturing and Engineering Science degree programs, or IF this scheme is feasible, or IF this is a wise use of WHEELING TAXPAYER DOLLARS.
3. The "Friends and Family of Robin Capehart" are committed to their scheme...they spoke of their unwavering support in the press just last week. They don't want anyone raising concerns or asking any questions -- they expressed disappointment with college presidents when we dared to challenge their plan. They seem uninterested in fact finding or rationale decision making.
4. Elliot, Thalmann, and Herron think they will convince City Council members to buy into this GOB scheme before Council members and WHEELING CITY TAXPAYERS discover what's really going on and how much it will really cost us all.

I could go on for hours, but I am permitted just three minutes:

5. There are many unanswered questions and far too many verbal gymnastics on the part of our City elected leaders:

1. How about all those "local jobs" they brag about in the press? Is there a signed agreement with BSC to ensure that Wheeling residents actually get jobs? How many jobs?
2. How about that "outside economic development investment" that BSC is bringing to our city? Exactly how much money has BSC committed to this scheme, in writing?
3. And finally, my last question...Who is the contractor that the Mayor and Capehart plan to give this \$1.5 million sweet-heart contract to for buildout of the OVMC space in question?

I trust that our City Council representatives, the media, and City taxpayers have heard enough here tonight to investigate further and to ask some tough questions that beg for answers.

END

NOTES:

1. The three Wheeling-based colleges already offer Engineering Science and Advanced Manufacturing career programs at ZERO (0) cost to Wheeling Taxpayers.
2. Northern and Wheeling University will announce a new articulated 2+2 Engineering Science degree program by August 2021. WVU is also working with us.
3. Know who your partners really are before inking any agreements. Relationships & partnerships established on a foundation of lies don't generally end well.