

From: John Whikehart

Date: May 6, 2026 at 7:19:36AM EDT

To: Deborah Myerson

Cc: Sue Sgambelluri, Randy Cassady, John West, Kerry Thomson, Anna Killion-Hanson, Jane Kupersmith, Isak Asare, Sydney Zulich, Courtney Daily, Andy Ruff, Dave Rollo, Hopi Stosberg, Matt Flaherty, Kate Rosenbarger, Isabel Piedmont-Smith, Doug Bruce, Jim Silberstein, Joyce Poling, Galen Cassady, Jay Baer, Geoff McKim, Jim Whitlatch, Jeff Underwood, Laurie Burns McRobbie

Subject: Re: RDC Response to Proposed Property Swap

Deborah:

I want to acknowledge receipt of your email and attached memorandum of May 4, 2026. I am not sure as to why there was a need for further explanation, other than perhaps to the larger distribution list. It is certainly not my intent to be adversarial in any way, but I will offer the following as my personal observations only.

1. My communication to you of April 15, 2026 was not meant to contain the details of a proposal for a land exchange, but was offered in the hope of beginning negotiations to determine if such an exchange was possible and beneficial to our community. Many of the issues you identify in your memo under the heading "Considerations Regarding Land Swap" would have been the purpose of those discussions. Since we had only been the formal recipients of the parcels for exchange on the same day as my request to you, the appraisal, environmental assessment, rent roll documentation, disposal of buildings all could have been subjects of discussion and conditions of an agreement. An appraisal and an environmental report, in one example, are now expected by the first of June. Decision on all tenant leases will be resolved this month, as another example.

The RDC instead pre-judged the issues for consideration in negotiations as "financial terms that were unfavorable", without any input or ability for us to respond to them. The same is true of an analysis of financial burdens on limited resources. Ditto for history of parcels: we would have provided explanation, and transparency of use of innkeeper's tax revenues was never an issue.

2. Under the heading "The Public Offering Lets the Market Determine Value" you reference a letter from the City Council of May 2024 signed by eight of nine members as guidance, and state "By contrast, a subsequent letter received in December 2025 indicated support for a land swap from only three Council members, reflecting a position that did not constitute a majority and therefore lacks the same level of collective Council endorsement".

Perhaps the RDC missed the televised Council meeting of April 22, 2026, two days after your decision, where five of the seven members attending in person spoke of their disappointment

that the land exchange idea was not fully vetted and in support of your renewed consideration? I happened to be watching on CATS and observed Margie Rice, Anna Killion-Hansen, and Dana Kerr all in attendance as the remarks were made, so they were fully aware and could have advised you of updated “majority” Council reaction.

3. Under the heading “Public Offering Supports Convention Center Goals” you state that “moving forward with the offering actually accelerates the timeline for resolution”. By 30 days? The RDC owned site under your stewardship has been vacant and producing no financial benefit to the taxpayers for the past 7 years, and we simply asked for a delay of 30 additional days for a discussion of opportunity...not of financial gain but of mutually beneficial community values.

It is also extremely important that we clearly distinguish responsibility for convention center goals so as not to create confusion among developers. You mention that “a compelling hotel proposal that serves the convention center’s needs will receive serious consideration”.

Serving the convention center’s needs as determined by whom? Receiving serious consideration of those needs by whom? The RDC?

For clear authority related to a host hotel and its site selection for the convention center I refer you to Monroe County Ordinance 2023-24 (July 2023) Section 4, and to the Interlocal Agreement between City and County units of government (February 2024) Article III, Sections 1.A and 1.B. (Section 1.B in particular directs that the parties “shall in good faith review and negotiate regarding such requests”, i.e.transfer of property assets.)

The Monroe County Capital Improvement Board of Managers was created and empowered as the sole neutral body for the purpose of determining convention center needs.

4. Under the heading “RDC Support for the Convention Center and Hotel” you attempt to capture a chronology of events. Although the chronology references only the past two years, the history actually began in 2019 with the RDC purchase of the former Bungler-Robertson law office, followed in 2023 with the additional purchase of the parking lot. The 2019 purchase fell \$5,000 under the threshold that would have required City Council approval. It was clear to all at the time of the 2019 purchase that the previous administration and RDC stated intent was for the site to be donated for the convention center expansion and a connected hotel. Current RDC member Sgambelluri was on the RDC at the time, supported the purchase’s intent, and can certainly further enlighten if needed.

In a March 25, 2024 meeting with Mayor Thomson she made clear that the north site was no longer for donation for the project but for sale to the CIB from Food and Beverage Tax revenues to recover the \$7 million purchase price. That is certainly her unquestioned right. The CIB chose instead to expand to the east on land donated free by the county. To have chosen otherwise would have been detrimental to the project.

5. In your section “2024-2025: Over a Year of Negotiations” you reference that substantive discussions regarding the funding gap with the CIB selected hotel developer “were largely presumed to fall to the RDC”. Of course they did. It was your property that you were attempting to sell. I am unsure where else those discussions would fall. There was never a RDC departure from the \$7 million asking price to close the funding gap. The CIB was never a party to any discussions. In fact, we were kept at arm’s length from them until late October 2025, fully one year later. When asked for assistance with your substantive discussions the CIB agreed to adjustments to the design, thereby cutting \$15 million from the gap, sought other financial support on your behalf as requested by the city team, and were eventually informed by the actual parties involved...the hotel developer and the RDC...that there was not a path forward.

I will note that left out of the section on support for the hotel was the December 2025 consideration by the RDC to make the site available “free or at nominal cost” for a host hotel. That proposal appeared to have the support of the staff and the mayor, but failed when that position did not receive the support of one of the mayor’s RDC appointees. The CIB request for negotiations was not asking for anything “free”...simply for discussions offering something in consideration.

6. Lastly, your conclusion states that your public offering “ensures that any ultimate development-whether a hotel or otherwise-reflects both community priorities and real market conditions”. I would simply respond that not just any hotel will meet requirements as the host convention center hotel, and the RDC is not the only arbiter of community priorities. As to real market conditions, it’s still about the money, and that is the RDC’s call.

The decision for the design requirements, room block guarantees, and selection of a convention center host hotel developer and site is the sole purview of the Monroe County Capital Improvement Board of Managers as found in county ordinance and by city-county agreement. On April 24, 2026 the CIB released a new RFP for a host hotel convention center developer, and the sites made available are those to the west and south of the current convention center. That RFP is the only source of response for an approved convention center host hotel development.

The CIB intent in reaching out to the RDC on April 15, 2026 was to follow the direction from Corporation Counsel Margie Rice in her letter to the CIB in May 2024:

“The CIB should expect that negotiations will be required for the purchase or acquisition of the RDC-owned parcels to the north, if the parcels are deemed integral to the Project.”

“Negotiations” is a term defined as formal discussions or a give-and-take dialogue between parties to reach agreements or satisfy mutual interests.

I personally regret that the CIB and RDC did not have a chance to have those discussions, explore the potential of a land exchange, address any RDC issues, discuss the community

values “return on investment” of both a host hotel and affordable housing goals, and perhaps satisfy mutual interests of achieving community priorities.

On May 4, 2026, at 9:44 PM, Deborah Myerson <deborah.myerson@gmail.com> wrote:

John Whikehart, President
Monroe County Capital Improvement Board

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Which was in reply to the May 4, 2026 email below

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May 4, 2026

Dear John:

In the attached memo, the members of the City of Bloomington Redevelopment Commission offer a detailed response outlining the considerations that informed our unanimous decision on April 20, 2026 to decline the Capital Improvement Board's (CIB's) proposed property swap involving the College Square property at W. 4th Street and S. College Avenue (also known as the Bunger & Robertson lot) and four parcels at W. 2nd St. & S. College Ave.

The memo addresses the financial, operational, and strategic considerations that informed the RDC's vote, and reaffirms the RDC's commitment to supporting the convention center hotel project through the public offering process now underway.

The RDC remains committed to a transparent, competitive process that will make College Square a transformative economic asset for downtown Bloomington. This approach ensures that any ultimate development—whether a hotel or otherwise—reflects both community priorities and real market conditions, positioning the City for a more durable and defensible result.

Best regards,

Deborah Myerson
President, Redevelopment Commission
City of Bloomington

Cc:
CIB members
City Council members
Mayor
RDC Executive Director
RDC members