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Dear Paula:

Recently, you opined that the City should seek the input of voters before issuing up to \$31 million in bonds for a new building to support the operations of the 15th District Court and the Ann Arbor Police. You said spending such money should not be done lightly, and that voters should be able to weigh in. We agree that the use of public funds is a serious responsibility that must be done carefully and openly. The City of Ann Arbor values public input and has gone to considerable effort to solicit that input on this project.

Since early 2004, the City has been aware that Washtenaw County needs the space currently occupied by the 15th District Court for County operations. Since that time, formal public hearings and many public meetings have been held for the specific purpose of obtaining community input on the project. For example, building alternatives have been explored and rejected based on public input. Project architects have revised their proposals several times to reflect public input on design and costs.

This building will be paid for by converting current rent payments to bond payments; using existing cash from appropriate savings; financial support from the DDA and certain minor revenue dedicated to this project. City Council has been clear that this project must be done within existing funds.

Under Michigan law, a public vote is clearly required if the City needs additional taxes to pay for a project. Yet, issuing debt for construction projects is routinely done without fanfare. In February of this year, the City issued approximately \$58 million in water/sewer bonds for construction projects. Two years ago, \$24 million in bonds were sold to construct the Wheeler Center. Just as with this project, the money was used to take care of infrastructure needs.

So, what is this project? In the simplest terms, the City is replacing the infrastructure needed to perform essential public services. The proposed building design combines frugal use of space with contemporary, durable materials that will enable existing courts and police services to be performed effectively and efficiently into the future. The design will meet LEED Gold design standards for energy efficiency, environmental sensitivity and types of materials, among other factors. At the same time, the architects have been creating a building envelope that will be attractive and inviting to our citizens, while being financially prudent.

For more than four years, City Council members, staff and architects have been studying the many complicated issues associated with choosing the appropriate way to meet our

building needs. As a community, we elect representatives of our citizens to serve on City Council for the very reason that they can commit the extensive time required to study and debate projects such as this. As United States citizens, our right to vote is one of our most precious entitlements. That does not make a vote the right tool to decide basic infrastructure decisions such as this.

Roger Fraser
Ann Arbor City Administrator