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Peter A Clark, President
Tampa Bay Watch
3000 Pinellas Bayway South
Tierra Verde, FL 33715
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Re: Mayor's Pier Working Group

Dear Mr. Clark:

I write to you in your capacity of Chairman of the City of the Mayor's Pier Working Group. The views expressed in this letter are solely my own. For the record, I served as president of Concerned Citizens of St. Petersburg, Inc., from its inception until January 8, 2014, and remain a member of its board of directors.

I note from the www.stpete.org website under the NEW PIER PLAN tab that 3 months were allocated for "Pier Program Development (Mayor's Working Group) – Define Program Requirements." This assignment of responsibility to the working group is good news, as the failure of City Council in the Fall of 2010 to agree upon and adopt program requirements was a contributing factor in the failure of the first attempt at providing a new or refurbished Municipal Pier.

I did a fair amount of construction law and litigation. I know of no set format for a program requirements document, but in my experience, and based on construction industry literature, it should inform prospective architects what uses the city seeks to make available to the city, its residents and its visitors, at the pier site. Any essential uses should be identified as such and other uses should have some indication of priority.

The essential use of our pier has been providing people the experience of going out over 1000 feet into Tampa Bay. Walking, running, cycling, skating or being driven in a vehicle are everyday activities, but engaging in them as you go out over the Bay and having the views open up is the unique experience the pier has offered. The over the water experience and the views available from a 500 foot pier are very different from those offered by a 1300 foot pier. A 1300 foot pier will likely cost more than half of what remains in the pier project development budget – even with a narrower approach bridge and smaller pier head and pier head structure.

It does not appear to be a good investment of our city's time and money to have the architects take blind guesses at the comparative value the city's leaders and voters will attribute to a pier project design that offers a significantly shorter pier accompanied by amenity package X versus a 1300 foot pier with a lesser amenity package Y. If a sound polling process can establish a strong basis to conclude that the residents are very accepting of a shorter pier without knowing what the other amenities might be, letting the architects make the guess is not such a high risk process. If sound polling data suggests that there will be substantial public opposition to any project design incorporating a significantly shorter pier than the Municipal Pier, either specify the pier length as a design requirement or encourage the adoption of a different pier development process.

In my opinion, the better way to deal with the pier length issue would be to include in the program definition and the RFQ/RFP documents the message that all competing architects will have the option of submitting two conceptual proposals, one of which must include an overwater pier of a minimum length of, say, 1150 feet, and the second proposal which could include no pier or one of any length.

Conceptual sketches of complete project solutions with full length and shorter pier iterations would provide the selection committee, the public and City Council a better ability to make informed choices and, hopefully, to coalesce around the design for our new pier. Thank you for your good work and considering my thoughts.

Very truly yours,

William C. Ballard