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SUBJECT: City/Rio Nuevo Relationship

Over the course of the past several weeks, the City/Rio Nuevo relationship has reached a tipping point. We either make it work, or we cash in 12 years of failed efforts and wasted taxpayer money. In a final effort to position the sides for success, there was a recent change in the leadership of the Rio Board. I support that move.

It is unfortunate that since the Senate President made the change, a crescendo has arisen that alleges cover ups, conspiracies and covert deals. Lost in the theorizing is the fact that nothing productive has been advanced by the Rio Nuevo Board and the City since the “Reconstituted” Board was appointed. This is a chance to see if that can happen.

Members of my own party have implicated significant supporters of Republican candidates in their conspiracy allegations. What might be a more accurate description of how the changes were advanced is simply that business leaders in the City want to see us be successful. The changes suggested to the Legislature and Governor reflect hope, not subversive deals being made by political power brokers.

Those same people are also openly suggesting that I am “protecting the City” and am trying to hide past wrong doing. That is uninformed and inaccurate. And when a racially inappropriate “cartoon” appeared in a right-wing blog site today, I decided to give it one more try to educate the theorists.

Since being elected in 2009, I have been consistent on two themes: make public all audits and investigations related to Rio Nuevo, and simultaneously work with the Board to do what the City and Rio failed to do for the first decade of its existence. That is, invest in projects that will yield tax dollars to the City. Contrary to the claims being made by the fringe wing of the Republican Party, nothing has changed in my positions. The city must ensure proper record keeping and documentation processes are in place for all projects. Witness these comments excerpted from my newsletters dating back to early this year:

February 29th

The previous motion had two parts. The second part was to call on the Attorney General to make public the results of the audits and investigations that are now into their second year. Let’s make all of this public and move forward. That part of our earlier motion still stands.

March 20th

Even before I was elected I called for investigations of Rio Nuevo to be made public – that includes the demands being made by Rio Nuevo in mediation. Any of you who read my newsletters or watch TV, know that from the beginning I told you about the millions of dollars that have been lost due to

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mismanagement both by the City and the past Rio Nuevo Board. I have openly called for and spoken about the investigations of those lost taxpayers dollars.

April 11th

The history of Rio Nuevo is making side deals and avoiding public process. This Board has morphed into what the previous Board was engaged in. I want no part of it – so I voted to make the deal points public.

April 18th

I believe it was inappropriate to be talking about a potential deal behind closed doors, relative to a piece of private property that is not implicated in the mediation or deal points included in any of the City/Rio dispute, and that directly implicates the integrity of the negotiations we were engaged in for developing the I-10 parcel.

The history of Rio Nuevo looks very much like what happened last week during mediation. Closed door presentations to a limited number of members of each Board/ Council, secrecy about how it came about, and unnecessarily leaving a taint on whatever the merits of the proposal might end up being.

April 25th

I'm going to continue to vote for open and public discussions with Rio so you can see who's asking for what to be done with your money. Maybe in that way we can begin to see some more serious dialogue take place. At the very least you'll be able to watch the sausage being made so you know exactly the ingredients

June 6th

During the 2009 campaign I was critical of the City for how it mishandled the spending and management of Rio. There has been one audit, one more coming and an FBI investigation to still be released as well. Those last two investigations are caught up in the State A.G's office. The individual who has them in his in-box to get done just dropped out of a race for State Attorney General. That should free up his time to get the reports done, made public and let's get the past firmly planted in the past. If there are sanctions to be meted out, mete away.

June 13th

Despite the claims to the contrary by some, there is nothing being swept under the rug. Bring out the audit and investigation results. But that's an old refrain now. While those are being finished, it is long past time to move ahead producing tangible results with your tax money. The TCC sits waiting.

Those are not the comments of somebody trying to sweep the past away. But I will not join with the fringe of the Party that cannot see beyond party labels and hope for a smoking gun to suddenly appear in some as yet undiscovered document. If the A.G. investigation yields that, so be it. But we cannot continue

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to let the relationship between Rio Nuevo and the taxpayers of this City sit dormant while we await those results. Some of us can multi-task; work with the board, and call for the investigations to be made public.

It is my belief that the element of the Republican Party that is mired in an inability to move ahead, even while waiting for investigations to be released are damaging to the Party. The shrill attacks on people like me who are trying to work across Party lines, create a healthy economic environment in this community while at the same time calling for a speedy resolution to the investigations are unproductive.

The Republican Party in this State has come to the point at which the internal division is either going to be addressed head on and healed, or the Party will split as it has in the past, to its own demise. I leave that resolution to the Party hierarchy. In the meantime, I will continue to call for transparency in the investigations, transparency in our meetings with Rio Nuevo, and I will continue to work with public servants from all political points of view in an effort to make Tucson the best that it can be. If the most recent election proved nothing else, it demonstrated that the extreme wing of the Party does not reflect the will of the electorate.

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