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December 2, 2011

Virginia Beach City Council Members
2401 Courthouse Drive
City Hall, Building #1
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456

Dear Council Members:

In 2007, prior to my election as Mayor, the Virginia Beach City Council voted for the Development Authority to pursue and recommend a plan to develop a headquarters hotel across from the Convention Center and an entertainment venue at the Dome site at 19th Street and Pacific Avenue. **While recently one of these recommendations from the Development Authority has been discussed in the media, no decisions have been made as to any potential public-private partnership.** The Development Authority's recommendation for a Convention Center Headquarters Hotel, when we receive it, will deserve serious review and input from the public and City Council.

One of my main passions as Mayor is to create new jobs and investment in our City's economy. This requires continual investment in our tourism industry, which has increased visitation, generated new business and produced new revenues for our City even during these difficult economic times. Last year, the tourism industry contributed more than \$1 billion in new spending in our city. We currently have the opportunity to evaluate a proposal for a Headquarters Hotel which could be tied to the future of tourism in Virginia Beach, to our ability to successfully compete for convention and meeting business, to the continued growth of our local economy, to our ability to create new jobs for our citizens, and to the creation of new revenues which diversify our tax base and take the funding burden off residential taxpayers' backs.

As Mayor, I have always believed it is important to seek the counsel and wisdom of the people of Virginia Beach whom we serve. I know you feel the same. On such a large public project for our beloved City, this principle is more important than ever. Therefore, I believe we should not follow the preliminary schedule to vote on this project on December 13.

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It is essential that the City have the time to inform the public of this proposed project's extensive benefits and the favorable economic impact which it will create. It is essential that the public have the time to provide their thoughts and concerns. It is essential that the Council be properly educated on this potential investment, as well as listen to our constituents on the issue.

At this time, we need to review the report and recommendation of the Development Authority and take the necessary time for all of us, and our citizens, to understand the project and the proposal to build it. We should not bring any public-private partnerships to a vote without this proper consideration and public comment.

Tourism has always been an economic engine that has assisted in keeping Virginia Beach's unemployment rate consistently below the national and state average. The Convention Center and Oceanfront areas are critical components of our local economy and vitally important to the future of our great City. I know we will all be mindful of this as we take the time we need to review and discuss this most important project with our citizens and our business community.

I look forward to the discussions, input and counsel that we will receive during this period of evaluation.

As always, it is an honor to serve as your Mayor.

Sincerely,



William D. Sessoms, Jr.

Mayor

C: Mr. James K. Spore, City Manager