



Office of the County Board
Dane County Board of Supervisors
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Supervisor Sharon Corrigan, Chair
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February 4, 2016

To: County Executive Joe Parisi

From: County Board Chair Sharon Corrigan 

Re: Res. 444, Alliant Energy Center Campus Planning

Thank you for your recent memo in which you recommend continued improvements at the Alliant Energy Center. I appreciate the attention you have given the campus in recent years and know that we are on the same page in wanting to strengthen the potential of this County asset.

Tonight, the County Board's Executive Committee considers Res. 444. This Resolution centers on the need for a plan for the future. The economic model for publicly-owned convention centers has changed and Dane County must be prepared to meet the new challenges in the marketplace.

Many members of the County Board are uncomfortable with continued investments into this campus that are not part of a larger plan that supports the economic growth of Dane County, addresses the needs of the surrounding neighborhood, and ensures that campus needs do not reduce our ability to provide core county services. The County Board is rightly concerned about improving mental health services, addressing poverty, and helping stabilize kids and families so young ones can succeed across our County. If we do not have a long-range plan for the economic health of the Alliant Energy Center, those needs will compete against the AEC each year for funding. Alternatively, a plan that helps us realize the potential of the AEC and ensures that the economic benefits of the campus are equitably distributed to the community will strengthen our tax base and enable the County to better meet the needs of our residents.

In your recent memo, you create a false choice between investing \$120 million in a new coliseum and spending no additional funds. Recently, you cited the Markin report, which recommends investing \$52 million to renovate the coliseum, as a guide for incremental improvements in the facility. Deferred maintenance at the campus currently exceeds \$6 million for needs such as chiller, boiler, and roof replacements and more. Clearly, funds need to be spent on Alliant Energy Center improvements if we are to remain in this business.

The real choice we are faced with is to be unafraid to examine the County's role as a purveyor of convention and entertainment space and then to determine which models of ownership and what type of facilities are needed to create a campus that competes in the modern marketplace for years to come.

This choice must involve partnering with other stakeholders. As the owner of the AEC, the County should lead this conversation, but we should not consider ourselves the only voice. The AEC campus sits in a location that can positively impact surrounding neighborhoods, properties, the beltline and more. We need and want to reach out to other key stakeholders of this area of the County before we take any actions to modify the campus.

This conversation must explore collective opportunities such as job creation, affordable housing, building tax base, lake quality and access, transportation and access while focusing on the sustainability for the AEC campus *and* the surrounding area.

The goal of reimagining the Alliant Energy Center - and recognizing the possible role of the campus in helping us address solutions and provide opportunities for the surrounding area in terms of social mobility, transit and transportation, affordable housing, job creation, equity and more – is bold and may seem daunting. But, from all we have heard since making the first study results public, the time is right to embark upon this conversation and opportunity to help us address both the future of AEC and other County interests.

Dane County's Alliant Energy Center (AEC) facilities and campus have played an important role in the economic and social fabric of Dane County, the city of Madison, and the surrounding area for decades. I look forward to working with you as we plan for a strong future for Dane County.

CC: Dane County Board of Supervisors
Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau
Madison Mayor Paul Soglin
Madison Common Council