

An Open Letter to Lee May
From the board of DeKalb Strong
dekalbSTRONG.com

August 10, 2015

Mr. May,

We're disappointed.

You have previously stated your commitment to reforming the way DeKalb County government operates. Several recent actions seem to be contrary to that goal.

The Blank Soccer Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

Most recently, you and four county commissioners succeeded in pushing through a proposal to build a soccer practice facility in central DeKalb. The proposal calls for a significant investment of at least \$12 million to be taken from the general fund of the county. Additionally, several buildings currently housing existing county departments are to be torn down. The cost of replacing those buildings has not been evaluated and is not part of the \$12 million referenced in the proposal.

Perhaps the proposal will be a net gain for the county, perhaps not. However, the point is that there was no time allowed for review, for performing a return on investment analysis, for analyzing provisions of the MOU that might be better defined or altered, or for feedback from the citizens of DeKalb. Indeed, a special meeting of county commissioners was scheduled just one scant week following the publication/announcement of the MOU. At that meeting requests for public comment were denied and the vote called for. There are a lot of needs in the county that \$12 million + dollars could go a long way toward addressing. It would have been advisable to consider alternate use, or a more productive way of spending such a large amount of taxpayer funds.

This smacks of the sort of questionable behavior you've pledged to eliminate. By allowing the commission to silence the citizens of DeKalb prior to the vote you've reinforced the disenfranchisement that a majority of your constituency was hoping to put in the past. By not leaving sufficient time for careful analysis, you've violated the most fundamental basics of responsible government.

The Independent Internal Auditor:

In several public meetings you stated that the position of independent, internal auditor was an important part of cleaning up the county. Further, you stated that you wanted the state legislature to mandate that such a function be created. We took you at your word. We worked toward that goal during the 2015 legislative session, the bill was passed to create that office, and is now law. However, you forwarded and the commission passed a budget that doesn't fund the very office of independent internal auditor that is actually now required by law. You've done the citizens of DeKalb County and those of us who worked for passage of the bill in the legislature a huge disservice and have violated your pledge to create the office soon as you could. This neglect must not stand!

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The Mike Bowers investigation and the county is “Rotten to the core” announcement:

Mike Bowers was hired to conduct an investigation of county operations in order to root out and clean up the corruption in DeKalb. It is documented in many media outlets that the investigation is to be conducted – in your words for “at least 120 days.” Suddenly that has been limited to 120 days and the investigation is defunded.

Mr. Bower’s “...Rotten to the Core” statement may have been inflammatory and sent in anger at not being allowed to speak at a public meeting (where no one was allowed to speak.) Perhaps it should have come instead with more substance and concrete evidence, but that is not reason enough to discredit the process that he has been asked to follow or to take the focus off the ultimate goal of making our county stronger, more transparent and ethical from top to bottom. None of us want the good employees demoralized by the tone of that letter. There is a way around that. It is a leader’s job to find it! Don’t give up on the goal you want to achieve. Those who are guilty of wrongdoing will be exposed when the final report is submitted. They’re unlikely to escape prosecution.

There is no doubt that there will be further bumps along the road that will shake confidence in our government once again. You have a tremendous opportunity to stay the course and provide leadership during this very difficult time. Don’t turn back now.

We’ve worked with you. We’ve attempted to support you. We’ve even at times defended you. All of the misdeeds above are reminiscent of a time recently passed when citizens were disengaged and county government was rather free to misbehave. That freedom no longer exists. Citizens are watching. Media is watching. The board and the supporters of DeKalb Strong are watching. County government WILL be held accountable. Please give us evidence that you’re going to make genuine effort to change the conduct of county government. Give us faith that you’re the person for the job.

With deepest sincerity,

DeKalb Strong board:

Marjorie Hall Snook, Gale Walldorff, Ron McCauley, Mary Lindsey Lewis