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TIME TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT BLUE ASH CHALLENGES

As the election of November 3rd looms near, it is time to begin to look at some of the issues that will face the new council, many of which have been brought on by the current council, with its very limited citizen input and their view of what Blue Ash should be.

The latest bombshell is of course the airport. The current council believes that between City of Cincinnati and the FAA there will be enough funds and political will to re-configure Blue Ash airport so we can build our park. When I asked Mr. Weber about this at his open house, some weeks ago, he assured me that there would be City of Cincinnati bulldozers at the airport the following week, cleaning up the old firing range that used to exist near the corner of Plainfield and Glendale-Milford Roads. You see, lead is bad for you and a cleanup is required. (Did you know that?). My suggestion that a City fighting to pay firemen and police officers might find it hard to come up with the cash to pay for all this in another City all together, was pooh-poohed. Well, no cleanup is happening as far as I can tell, no runways are being re-aligned. So the rumors that the airport is to close may well be true. If you sift through the several alternatives, the best would be that Blue Ash buys the rest of the airport and re-considers its plans in one of two ways: (1) The new park would be smaller, to accommodate an economically feasible Blue Ash Airport that would require better runways and the building of hangars or (2) Close the airport, and build a much bigger park, covering all of the old airport grounds. Either way, the new council is faced with a considerable expense that will be a part of budgets for at least the rest of our lives. The new council will have a tremendous positive impact on Blue Ash for generations if it handles this problem openly and with as much participation by the residents and businesses of Blue Ash as is possible. In short, the airport problem can be solved if we involve EVERYONE and find out what most of us want.

The second problem is downtown. Let's take an honest look: Cooper Road needs repair. The old Thriftway store occupies a valuable piece of land where anything from a movie theatre to a Home Depot could be built, but nothing is being done. If you believe Sibcy Cline and the City Council, we will soon have 91 housing units being built in an area originally occupied by about 10 houses or so. Central residential districts need urgent investment, including sidewalks where none exist today. We have Hosbrook's Garage, which needs to be negotiated. There are pie-in-the sky plans for on-street parking, gates or arches leading into downtown, leading to many empty apartments and shops. These are all serious problems, all requiring serious council time - and money. The current Council, for all its claims of smart governance and fiscal responsibility has focused on buying land for parks, sprucing up the golf course and building a rec center. These latter projects are worthy of our time and money but not at the expense of everything else. The new council would be wise to focus on the basics of Blue Ash, revitalizing downtown and ensuring that we are considered an attractive venue for business and events.

Our new Council will have very serious issues to resolve. They need to resolve these issues through a clear, openly communicated and discussable plan. It will take more than two years, and will require belt-tightening and determination. We have a wonderful, caring community that wants to succeed. We have businesses that we need to cater to, and we have residents in the downtown area that have been neglected too long. In order to pull this off successfully over the next five to ten years is a council that can provide true community leadership and guide true citizen participation. Current council is woefully short on providing true leaders, and has shown itself particularly averse to public participation in decisions. The next Blue Ash City Council needs to be very, very different.