



**David S. Mann**  
*Councilmember*

November 29, 2020

## MOTION

I move that the City establish a **Commission To Clean Up City Council**, a small blue-ribbon panel of no more than nine members to study the city's development process, in particular negotiations with private developers, and develop recommendations to improve it and better insulate it from political influence and cronyism.

1. The Commission should be co-chaired by academic and business leaders. No member should be personally directly involved in development with the city.
2. The Commission membership should be balanced and diverse and include expertise in managing ethics issues.
3. Without limiting the work of the Commission in any way, it should:
  - a. consult municipal finance, development, and campaign contribution experts.
  - b. review and evaluate the city's use of public incentives for development including direct awards, loans, and tax abatements.
  - c. determine how well and with what clarity the city establishes and then achieves its goals in providing public incentives to developments without allowing developers to benefit at a higher level than justified by the public benefit to the city.
  - d. review best practices in other cities across the country.
  - e. study possible links between campaign contributions and the award of development contracts and/or significant changes in the final form of a development contract.
  - f. propose ways in which the city could track connections between campaign contributions and the award of public incentives to developments.
  - g. propose a Code of Conduct for Cincinnati's elected officials and developers. In particular, the Code should require developers to report inappropriate requests from Cincinnati's elected officials (anecdotally, I have been told that



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the charges set forth in the first two indictments were not the only such attempts to obtain personal benefit).

- h. Recommend whether contract awards should be prohibited to developers who made campaign contributions to city candidates within the prior twenty-four months.
  - i. Recommend whether the city should establish a hotline by which any citizen, including developers, can report in confidence any inappropriate request or demand from any public servant, elected or otherwise.
4. The Commission should present recommendations to the community no later than May 1. These recommendations should include any desirable amendments to the city Charter.
  5. Obviously, this Commission requires staff and financial support.

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## STATEMENT

The current crisis at City Hall presents an opportunity for serious and needed reform in the way the city does business. Post-pandemic, our community is poised to thrive by so many measures. But not if our citizens do not trust that City Hall is a place of integrity and commitment to honest public service.

There are several reasons why a small independent Commission is needed to develop comprehensive recommendations for change. Council is too close to all of this and can benefit from an outside group's independent look. Self-reform by council will always be suspect. An outside Commission will help council avoid blind spots. The challenge at hand simply requires more than the cursory review that council can competently provide. **We need much more at this critical juncture of the city's history.**