

Request for a Meeting

From: Barlage, Nic [REDACTED] Tue, Jan 16, 2024 at 9:47 PM EST (GMT-05:00)
To: Christopher Ronayne <cronayne@cuyahogacounty.us>; Erik Janas <ejanas@cuyahogacounty.us>
Cc: Amanda M. Dempsey <Adempsey@cuyahogacounty.us>; Robinson, Wendell
[REDACTED] Schuerlein, Galen [REDACTED] Murray, Meg
[REDACTED] Clayton, Kevin [REDACTED] Brady, Amanda [REDACTED]

Dear Chris and Erik:

This afternoon, I was advised by the Mayor of Cleveland's Chief of Staff that the City and County have agreed on a Gateway Board Chair candidate and that such appointment will be publicly announced this Friday.

To say that I was shocked is an understatement. As one of Gateway's two primary tenants and the largest driver of economic activity in Cuyahoga County, we have for the past year been in frequent communication with you, your staff, along with key leaders at City Hall, about our desire to partner with you to create a more strategic vision for the Gateway District. Ourselves, along with the Guardians (Gateway's other key tenant) share a goal of creating a more effective dynamic between ourselves, Gateway and our public partners at Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland. We have even gone as far as to commission a study via a third party to aggregate best practices from across the USA to share with all interested parties on how entities like Gateway can play a more proactive role within our community to help drive better outcomes for all.

In our meeting on December 19, 2023, at the Greater Cleveland Partnership, with both your staff and City staff in attendance, we were told that the Gateway Board appointments would not occur until the County had a better understanding of Gateway's operations. Such understanding was expected to be developed, in partnership with ourselves and the Guardians, at our forthcoming GCP meetings in the coming weeks. You indicated that the entire process would take 1-2 months (January-February) to be completed during which time the new County appointments to the Gateway Board could/would be made, followed by the new Board Chair appointment. It was emphasized as we pushed for an understanding of process and potential funding sources that 'this wouldn't be rushed, and we need time to sort this out.' Your decision to move forward with this Board Chair appointment outside of the process you outlined and, with very little transparency or communication, is not made in the spirit of partnership. In our initial meeting on February 9, 2023 we were asked to help qualify candidates for this opportunity. We initiated a collaborative process that resulted in many conversations, all of which went nowhere with anyone from the County.

For years, the County has benefited from our organization's partnership and willingness to go above and beyond to operate a world class venue. The County owns Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse and, as such, is responsible for making all major capital repairs to the facility. However, over the years, our organization has taken on repairs that would certainly fall into the County's obligations, far exceeding our responsibilities under our lease. On a number of occasions, we have in good faith provided bridge funding to support necessary major capital repairs until such time as the County could identify and execute a funding source. This often resulted in our waiting months or years to be reimbursed. With regard to our most recent major capital repair request, we have begun the necessary work and, again, are advancing the funds necessary, based on your promise that our organization will be reimbursed by no later than June 2024.

We have followed your directive around process and transparency regarding our major capital repairs, including communicating openly about the facility's ongoing needs. We expect a two-way partnership with the County and yet we have not had the same transparency and communication reciprocated, on many levels, relative to Gateway and the evolution of its strategic direction.

We are disappointed with how the Gateway Board appointment process was handled, not due to who, but due to the process, the why, and ultimately what the vision is for Gateway. We can say that after a year worth of work we remain as unsure of the direction that our landlord has as we were when we embarked on this process. As an immediate next step, we would request a face-to-face meeting with you within the next week to discuss how we can re-establish transparency, communication and eventually trust between our organizations.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to making NE Ohio a better place tomorrow than it is today and we will be unwavering in how we pursue these outcomes for the good of our greater community. We look forward to our conversation.

Best regards,

Nic



NIC BARLAGE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
CLEVELAND CAVALIERS
ROCKET MORTGAGE FIELDHOUSE | 1 CENTER COURT | CLEVELAND, OH | 44115
[REDACTED]



Rock Entertainment Group
