

# MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Richard Kriseman  
Gloria Campbell  
Veatrice Farrell

FROM: Ms. Rene Y. Robinson-Flowers

DATE: August 23, 2017

RE: Potential Compromise between the following parties: Callaloo Group and the Manhattan Casino Legacy Collaborative, Inc.

As a former City Councilmember, I have been in the position that the current council members will be in on tomorrow. I have also had the pleasure of working with and supporting Mayors of diverse perspectives, varying points of views, and a wide range of views related to the rebuilding and branding of South St. Petersburg.

Through the years, the topics of discussion that have proven to be the most emotional are those embraced as historic landmarks with incredible historic value – reminding all us of the power and strength that African Americans possessed then and now!

The unsolicited proposal process of the Manhattan Casino has proven to be a concern that could possibly divide our community thereby stalling any future progress. Notable are the desires of each party to provide a venue that could invigorate the Deuces Corridor. However, one cannot dismiss the voices of those like myself who have endured a closed and ignored structure from 1968 until 2013 (the opening of Sylvia's).

I took the time to read the proposals submitted by both parties. I also took the time to sit with the Legacy representatives (Gloria Campbell and Veatrice Farrell) in an attempt to better understand how we got to where we are and why we are in this current position.

Without rehashing previous conversations, I must say that I now know and understand a lot more than before. Business dealings from parties who are not familiar with each other can certainly take twists and turns. To say the least, I believe this is the case. When not all parties are present at the table with a focus on civility, emotions then rule and guide the discussion.

As such, I would like to put forth specific points that I feel are the rationale behind the breakdown of a collaborative solution:

- The proposal from the Callaloo Group was not a response to an RFP, it was a proposal provided to the city (unsolicited, meaning not asked for)
- When presented to the Deuces Live representatives, the sense was that the proposal eroded the historical richness and vibrancy that once occupied the Manhattan Casino
- The Legacy group was formed as an additional option for the city to consider as an occupant of the Manhattan Casino

- At the request of city leadership, the two parties attempted to collaborate
- The proposal from the Callaloo Group was to allow the Legacy group access to the upstairs one day out of the month (Friday) for their activities at no charge
- The Legacy group countered with an offer that was admittedly aggressive
- No additional counters were offered
- Callaloo was put forth as the potential awardee by leadership
- Suggestions of collaboration abound however talks have stalled in light of a sense that communications are not being relayed accurately; that information is not being transmitted back to Ramon Hernandez or Vincent Jackson.

On August 22, 2017, a meeting between Gloria Campbell and Ramon Hernandez was to occur with the hope of finding an amicable solution such that the community would be honored and the business acumen of both parties would prevail in tandem. Unfortunately, that meeting did not occur in that the request for the meeting to occur ONLY between Ms. Campbell and Ramon would not be honored. So here we are.

### **POTENTIAL SOLUTION**

Maintaining the bottom floor as a restaurant would be a welcomed addition to the corridor. Continuing the legacy of the upstairs as a Jazz venue with the ability to swing to Big Band music while displaying the artistic side of our community is in keeping with the Manhattan's history!

Therefore, my suggestion is that the building be leased to two occupants. The Callaloo Group will retain the bottom floor and the Legacy group would retain the top floor via a lease agreement with the city.

Keep in mind that the focus of the Callaloo Group was to honor the legacy and history of the Manhattan Casino on the second floor. This can be accomplished by separating out the parcels. In addition, my conversation with Ms. Campbell and Ms. Farrell as representatives of the Legacy Group focused on (to name only a few):

- Putting forth a sound fiscal plan
- Addressing the cost of any buildout, renovations, and upgrades of the audio system, staging, lighting, insurance, appropriate permits/licenses
- Submitting a plan that would address sustainability 3-5 years
- Addressing staffing, as well as marketing of rental availability, event activities, etc.

The aforementioned is a suggestion of the direction of a collaborative partnership and serves only as a very rough template. The Legacy group will be tasked with adding meat to the bones. There are examples of shared use facilities- this could be an example of a strong partnership that would address the communities concerns, enhance economic stability by providing jobs, and provide educational opportunities via a culinary arts platform.

I thank you for allowing me a moment of your time and I sincerely hope that additional options are seriously considered.