

January 10, 2020

Re: AN ORDINANCE No. 2019-247

Dear City Council Members:

I am writing to strongly support ORDINANCE No. 2019-247 This ordinance would assure that timely responses are made by the city to offers of donated property by private citizens. Timely action would hopefully enhance opportunities for the city and its inhabitants, and avoid the loss of valuable property due to negligence and needless red tape.

For years the Ellett family had wanted to donate our island in the James adjacent to our home at 7804 Rockfalls Drive to the James River Park System. Discussions began with Ralph White when he was in charge. After our mother died in 2016, we began the formal process of contacting the city with our intent to DONATE Goat Island to the city. For over two years, we got the runaround from the city, and finally we were so frustrated that we sold the island to Riverside Outfitters. Please note my letter to Kristen Larsen below, sent June 19, 2019.

“Kristen, thank you for all your help with trying to get the city to accept our desired donation of Goat Island for the James River Park System. Nathan Burrell also tried very hard to get the donation moving forward. However, after over two years of many phone calls, letters, emails and even personal visits with the city by my brothers and me, the proposed agreement finally sent to me by Paul McClellan on June 6, 2019 was a little (really a lot!) too late. Our offer expired when we got a real buyer who wanted the island and pledged to make good use of it and preserve its history.

The best way I can describe what my brother calls 'the city's incompetence' is to show you all the documentation I have of the many attempts I made to get some action on this matter. I know there are other phone calls and visits that were made, but I don't have them documented. I am attaching the documentation I have, starting with a letter I sent to you on March 6, 2017. Based on the content of the letter, I know that I had tried to get a response before that.

I am truly sorry that the park system is the loser in this, because our family really wanted it to have the island for the community's use and enjoyment. However, the city administration obviously didn't value the parks or our intended donation enough to make a timely acceptance.

My brothers and I would really like an answer about the process and what went wrong. Perhaps if we bring these issues to light, some changes can be made so as to avoid this type of thing happening for others in the future.

Again, thank you so much for your response and help.”

I am hopeful that the proposed ordinance will assure that situations like this never occur again in Richmond. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Susan E. Ellett