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September 15, 2009

Dear Comptroller Haynie:

Countywatch, a formal permanent committee of Orange County citizens, business and political leaders, would like the office of the Orange County Comptroller to perform an interim audit on the construction contracts and activities related to the building of the new Orlando Events Center — the new Amway Arena.

Countywatch applauds your office's efforts over the past years in performing vital audits, identifying waste and mismanagement, and bringing those issues to light. You have served the public trust placed in you admirably, and earned the respect of many of Orange County's citizens and leaders. For this reason, we believe the office of Orange County Comptroller is best suited to call for and perform such an audit.

Countywatch would like to know that the City of Orlando, which is managing the contract, is now and remains in compliance with agreements with and concessions made to Orange County as part of the overall venues negotiation process. We believe that it will be more prudent to do an interim audit than to do an audit once the contract and construction are complete, since it would be impossible to rectify non-compliance *ex post facto*.

The goal of the interim audit is not to punish any municipality or organization involved in the contract and construction, but an opportunity for all involved to proactively build the public's trust in the venues process. As you undoubtedly recall, the public debate over the venues and their funding was long and contentious, with many expressing their belief that the venues and related financial agreements were not in the best interest of the citizens of Orlando and Orange County.

In the time since the final decision was made, the world's economy has experienced a downturn and our nation, state and region are still experiencing the ill effects of the current recession — in fact, our region is among the national leaders in foreclosures and unemployment. Our city, county, state and schools are all suffering financial hardships and having to make hard decisions which affect services to citizens. It would be deeply divisive for our community to find, after construction, that the City of Orlando needlessly or unintentionally wasted money on the venues while teachers are losing their jobs, and police and firefighters are at risk of losing their livelihood.

The next meeting of Countywatch is Saturday, October 3, 2009 at 8 a.m. We, the Countywatch Executive Committee, would like to report to our members at that time that your office has responded affirmatively to our request for an interim audit. Your response can be communicated directly to Chairman Jim Martin at 407-461-8926.

Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely



cc:
Mayor Buddy Dyer
Mayor Rich Crotty
Orlando City Commission

Orange County Board of Commissioners
The Orlando Sentinel
Orlando Business Journal
Orlando Weekly