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PRESS RELEASE

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MAYOR JOHNSON, COMMISSIONERS FRANCK AND IVINS TRY TO IMPROVE CITY HALL PHONE SERVICE & SAFETY

Better, Cheaper Project Rejected by Kim, Scirocco

The City telephone system is out-of-date, has limited utility, cannot be expanded and has proven to be a safety concern with respect to the Police Department phone lines. In order to alleviate these problems, Mayor Scott Johnson proposed today to consolidate *some* money from the 2009 Capital budget into this year's Capital budget. The purpose? To improve communications with the public and now eliminate problems in the Police Station, Fire Stations, DPW garage and City Hall, while realizing significant savings over currently budgeted amounts.

Last month, the City Council unanimously adopted the recommendation of the Capital Budget Committee to spend \$150,000 in 2009 on telecommunications upgrades, in addition to \$170,000 that was allocated to that item and already passed by the last City Council, for 2008. The Capital Committee deemed this project the number one priority over all other capital projects.

Deputy Mayor Shauna Sutton was able to realize significant cost savings by incorporating a comprehensive approach to the problem. As a result, the City would be expending \$258,000, rather than the fully budgeted amount of \$320,000. Additionally, savings of thousands of dollars were projected to continue for years into the future. The project would also allow redundancy in the system, along with a mobile emergency operations center, to provide coverage during power outages and other disasters, while also being portable for future transfer into a new Police Station.

Mayor Johnson and Commissioners Franck and Ivins voted in favor of reallocating the funds to this year's budget, undertaking the project now and realizing significant savings. Commissioner Kim, who has been publicly complaining about problems with telephones in the Police Station for more than one year, voted against the project. Commissioner Scirocco also voted against the telephone system. Neither Commissioners offered an alternative solution or cost estimate, except that both noted vaguely that the Police Station system should be replaced, without addressing the remainder of the City's needs.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor expressed frustration at the gridlock that has frozen City Hall for too many years. Johnson stated, "It is unfortunate when public officials ignore problems that they themselves have complained about, in order to make political points. That is not service to this community, that is not leadership. Some on the Council, unfortunately, are continuing bad practices and preventing the City from moving forward".

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