



Aiken Municipal Development Commission

P.O. Box 1177, Aiken SC, 29802

7/26/2022

Linda Johnson
Historic Aiken
PO Box 959
Aiken, SC 29802

Dear Ms. Johnson

In response to your correspondence of July 22, 2022 regarding the integrity and security of the Hotel Aiken, I assure you that all reasonable measures are in place to ensure just that. The Aiken Municipal Development Commission has committed significant resources to erect fencing and screening around the rear of the site, to include chain-link gates placed over the rear entries to the building itself. The building is also monitored 24/7 by a robust set of smoke, heat and fire sensors placed throughout the structure with direct alerts received by the Aiken Department of Public Safety. Additionally, the monitoring firm, ADS, has been engaged to add motion and intrusion alarms to the system, which will include ADPS notification and an audible siren on site in the event of any intrusion.

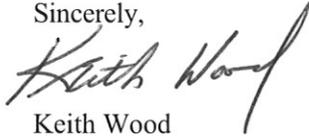
You should also be aware the AMDC has worked with the ADPS to renovate one of the motel suites along Bee Lane to house a law enforcement cadet who serves as an onsite caretaker responsible for security and fire watch duties. I assure you that any time you have, as you reported, observed the rear gate at the hotel site open, an authorized key holder is present on the property. In other cases, the gate has been and will remain securely locked. If ever you have specific concerns or see suspicious activity please call ADPS dispatch at 803-642-7681 and report your concerns. Please contact me if you wish to tour the building and learn first-hand about the numerous steps employed to secure and stabilize the property to date.

The AMDC first pursued the purchase of the property in question and those adjacent to it at the behest of Aiken City Council precisely because there were concerns about the building, its future, and, in no small part, because of the fire risk the building posed in its partially disassembled and abandoned state. My immediate predecessor as Chair of the AMDC, Tim Dangerfield penned a letter to the Mayor and City Council in August of 2020 raising the alarm and urging the City to act. Since then, the AMDC has worked tirelessly to find a suitable permanent solution that would eliminate any and all such risks through the redevelopment of the properties. The exact concerns you raise have been exacerbated by litigation which has slowed the process to address these issues permanently. It is the AMDC's goal to improve our downtown whereby the area in question is safe, secure, and iconic for our entire community. The AMDC's plans are to transform the downtown into one that everyone will be proud of for generations to come.

Finally, you state that there is "virtually no insurance" for the hotel property. The property in question was substantially demolished on the interior prior to the AMDC purchase of the building. It has no wiring or electrical service, no plumbing or utility service and most of the interior components were entirely stripped to include doors, floors, fixtures, etc. Walls have been opened throughout the structure and

numerous floors have been opened to the joists below. While the building has been found to be largely stable and watertight, insurance underwriters will not insure such a structure in that same manner as a fully intact structure, abandoned or otherwise. The building, as the unsightly shell it currently is, has been insured for \$284,060. While it is clear this amount is not replacement value of an intact and fully functioning structure, that is not what the AMDC purchased and such coverage is not available in its current state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Wood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "K".

Keith Wood

Cc: Rick Osbon, Mayor
Tim O'Briant, Economic Development Director
John Boyette, Editor, Aiken Standard
Lucy Knowles, President, Green Boundary Foundation