From: Rick Cruz
To: All Alders
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Increasing the dollar threshold for when competitive selection is required for service contracts —from $50,000 to $75,000— is a policy change that is deeply concerning. While proponents argue that this change will save staff time, the potential long-term consequences far outweigh any short-term administrative efficiencies that might be gained. First and foremost, the purpose of competitive selection—such as bidding or a request for proposals (RFP)—is to ensure transparency, fairness, and the best use of taxpayer dollars. By requiring competitive bidding for contracts over a certain threshold, the city can be confident that public funds are being spent responsibly, and that contracts are awarded to the best-qualified vendors, not simply those with the right connections or the easiest access to decision-makers. This process helps minimize waste, fraud, and corruption. Raising the threshold for competitive selection undermines these principles. By allowing larger contracts to be awarded without the rigor of competition, the city is opening the door to less oversight and potentially inflated costs. While saving time on administrative tasks may seem like a sensible goal, it should not come at the cost of transparency or fairness. The city should not prioritize efficiency over ensuring that contracts reflect the best value for taxpayers. This change could lead to the selection of vendors based on convenience or favoritism, rather than on merit, potentially resulting in contracts that are less effective or more expensive than they could have been if competitive bidding had been required. Furthermore, this change would disproportionately impact smaller, local businesses that rely on the transparency and fairness of the competitive selection process to compete on a level playing field. By removing competitive bidding for contracts over $50,000, the city may inadvertently create an environment where only the largest or well-established firms have the resources to secure these contracts, leaving out smaller businesses that may offer equal or better services at a lower price. It is also important to recognize that the cost of "staff time" savings should not be the sole deciding factor in policy changes that affect public accountability. Saving staff time should never be an excuse to reduce transparency, especially when it comes to the expenditure of public funds. This proposed change should be scrutinized more closely to ensure that any potential time savings do not come at the expense of the public's trust in the city's decision-making processes. In conclusion, raising the dollar threshold for when competitive selection is required is a misguided policy change. While saving time might be appealing in the short run, it risks compromising the quality, transparency, and fairness of the service contract process, potentially costing taxpayers more in the long term. The city should focus on improving efficiency through other means, without sacrificing the core principles of responsible governance and fair competition.
Rick Cruz