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To the Mayor and Council –

When I moved to Rockville in 2000, it was just a place. Nice enough, but to me it was nothing special. After living here for a while, I grew to like where I was; its closeness to everything, its reasonable housing prices, the culture, and the people, and I thought that it might be interesting to get involved with the City a bit more. So, I applied to the Cultural Arts Commission because I am a theater person and thought it would be fun. Surprisingly enough, I was accepted! And it was fun even though it was more about visual than performing art, which was okay. What I was not prepared for is meeting John Moser, the committee chair.

John was ex-military, Republican, and a staunch conservative, as unlike me as a person could get... but he loved art, and theater, and literature, and Rockville, and I learned so much from him! John lived civic responsibility and personal commitment. He put his all into Rockville. He did it cheerfully, energetically, and completely. At times I thought he though he was running the City from his commission chair, but he wasn't. He was just involved and passionate, and one day he came up to me and said, "So, what do you want to be when you grow up?" He thought I would be a good fit for the Planning Commission. I figured, why not, and through his marketing of me, I was appointed to what became one of the most fascinating, exciting, expanding times in my life. I learned how the City worked, I learned about planning and compromise and finding out how much I didn't know. Nothing made me more excited than coming into a site plan review or a Pike Plan discussion with a set of pre-conceived opinions and being proven wrong. The City is complicated and messy and constantly changing, and I had a hand in making that all happen... and I loved it! I still look back on that time as some of the best and most meaningful in my life. There is really something amazing about being one of people who really makes things happen in your community.

Once my time on the Planning Commission ended, I still kept my hand in, working on campaigns for mayor and council candidates, and I was able to be a major contributor on the Preserving Rockville's Character working group for the Rockville Summit. Over the past few years, for various reasons, my ability to participate in the activity of the City has curtailed, and I really miss it. I'm not a politician and I don't know if I have the stamina to run for office, but to have a chance to be part of the business of the City again, even if it's just for a short time, is an opportunity I cannot pass up.

My vision for the City is one of balance. To survive and thrive, Rockville needs to embrace the changes taking place within our County like the growth of urban node areas. We need to encourage moderate-to high-density mixed-use development, a thriving business community, and improved public transportation options like the BRT. However, we also need to maintain our character. We need to continue to be the "Small City with the Hometown Feel." We need tree-lined neighborhoods and single-

family homes with yards, and parks, and neighborhood stores we can walk or bike to, and all the things that make Rockville a comfortable and desirable place to live.

Another place we need to strive for balance is in the APFO/APFS. Its intent is admirable, but its implementation is flawed. The way it is now, we run the risk of hurting ourselves in the name of protecting ourselves. I think the time has come for some thoughtful and no doubt contentious re-examination of the standards as we fight to find a way to make sure we get the things we need, like more schools and better roads, while protecting ourselves against unrestrained and harmful growth.

A third place that we can work to find better balance is in our people. This may sound strange coming from an old, middle-class white guy, but I feel the City does not properly represent the diversity that lives within our borders. Rockville is recognized as being one of the most diverse communities in the region, if not the country, and I think we have tremendous opportunity to embrace those differences and better represent segments of our population that are growing, but still civically silent.

If I have the honor to serve on the Council, will I always agree with you? No. Will I listen to your argument and try to see things your way? Yes. Will I always change my mind? No. Will I win graciously and lose gracefully? I certainly hope so! Will I listen to our citizens and business and do my best to support their best interests? Absolutely. There is a whole lot about the City that I don't know, but I do know I am ready to learn and to work hard and to fight the good fights to help make Rockville the best it can be.

Respectfully submitted –



-- Jerry Callistein