

The K Group

*Katherine A. Kinsman, President
5157 Pinedale Heights Drive
Rapid City, South Dakota 57702
Phone: 605/716-7590 Fax: 605/718-1197
kkinsman@aol.com*

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Dear Mayor Kooiker, City Council President Wright and Members of the Rapid City Common Council,

I am unable to attend the council meeting tonight in person due to a prior commitment, but I am writing to express my support for the Civic Center Expansion proposal that you are now considering for our community—a decision that will impact our region for the next 30-40 years!

I had the opportunity to serve on the Civic Center Futures Committee this past year. During the process, committee members representing diverse stakeholders throughout our community became familiar with the current Civic Center physical plant challenges and lost opportunities. We reviewed background information on the current Civic Center operations, looked at economic data projections, competitor facilities and communities. We also engaged with a broad array of other community stakeholders, including the young people of our community who will be both payers and beneficiaries of any decision that is made.

During the process, I recalled when my husband, Steve Zellmer, and I moved here in 1992, that we often commented to others in and outside of our community about what a great Civic Center facility we had here right in the heart of the city. We have been frequent attendees of events held in all of the venues of the civic center over the years and consider ourselves lucky to have landed in a community that made such an investment long before our arrival. Unfortunately, in the 22 years since our arrival, the Barnett Arena hasn't kept up with the times. In fact, it is more reminiscent of a 1970's high school arena, not the jewel we once talked about so proudly.

As a result of participating in the Civic Center Futures Committee and attending some of the public meetings held during the concept design process, I became convinced that a Barnett Arena expansion was the best direction for the long term viability of the Civic Center as an entertainment and convention facility. It is Rapid City's most powerful sales tax engine! If we fail to invest strategically for the long term, it will affect our competitiveness as a future site for events and conventions. More importantly, it will jeopardize future city sales tax revenues that pay for essential services and quality of life amenities, a significant portion of which are paid for by visitors to our area.

I would like to commend the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Board of Directors and the architects and construction consultants engaged this past year to help evaluate the costs and benefits to our community of the various options. You should be proud of the public outreach they have done to gather input at each step along the way, starting with the Futures Committee and continuing with the public engagement and stakeholder meetings during the concept design process. This input strengthens the decision to move forward on one of the most important decisions for our city's future.

Thank you in advance for your support and leadership to make Rapid City shine as a Star of the West!

Regards,



Katherine (Kitty) Kinsman