



Friends of the Civic Center

November 18, 2021

Mayor Daniel Biss
Members of the Evanston City Council
2100 Ridge Ave.
Evanston, IL 60201

Dear Mayor Biss and Members of the City Council,

Yesterday, there was an article in the New York Times about the Archdiocese of New Orleans and Xavier University agreeing to pay the federal government fines to resolve allegations that both organizations filed false claims for over \$60 million in FEMA funds stemming from Katrina.

The firm that was advising these institutions was AECOM, the same firm that the City's engineering department hired to consult and advise on moving the Civic Center along with the police and fire departments headquarters. AECOM advised these two institutions to file these false claims for compensation. The article can be read here:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/16/us/archdiocese-new-orleans-fraud-settlement.html?searchResultPosition=1>

If AECOM was complicit in a scheme to defraud the federal government of a sizable amount of funds, **it cannot be trusted** to provide objective and honest advice on the best options for what would be a major undertaking for Evanston. Instead, its selection — not as the lowest bidder, but chosen on the extremely subjective basis of “understanding the project” better, increases distrust of the process.

While our organization opposes moving the Civic Center from its present location, does the City of Evanston really want to do business and take advice from a firm that is clearly dishonest and untrustworthy? We urge you to put a stop to moving forward with this staff request, which by the way was put forward without the sponsorship of any councilperson.

Regards,

Steering Committee of Friends of the Civic Center

CC: The Roundtable, Evanston Now, Daily Northwestern, Evanston Patch