

LATOYA CANTRELL, MAYOR
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

January 28, 2020

The Honorable Jason Williams
Councilmember At Large
New Orleans City Council
1300 Perdido Street, Rm 2W50
New Orleans, LA 70112

The Honorable Helena Moreno
Councilmember At Large
New Orleans City Council
1300 Perdido Street, Rm 2W40
New Orleans, LA 70112

RE: SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Dear Councilmembers Williams and Moreno:

I am in receipt of your letter inviting my staff to attend the Special Council Meeting. At no time has my administration denied a request for an update by any Councilmember regarding the status of the Hard Rock collapse. In fact, this administration has consistently provided briefings to the public regarding the status of the Hard Rock collapse. These routine press conferences have been covered by all media outlets. The press conferences also have been live-streamed as well as made accessible on social media for later viewing by the public. Your decision to move forward with a Special Council Hearing, in an effort to provide a forum for the public to air its frustration with the Hard Rock Hotel Collapse, is ill-advised at this time and puts the timely demolition and the ongoing investigation of the site at-risk. Given these concerns, my staff will not be present at the hearing.

As has been stated to you in person, all applicable parties are very close to completing various, necessary legal agreements within the next week to allow the full demolition process to begin by the following week. A public examination of sensitive private contracts between the owner, its insurance company, the demolition company, its insurers and the like, prior to the finalization of these agreements, may cause some of the necessary parties to not participate in this complex recovery and demolition project. In fact, one of the insurers may have withdrawn due to the negative publicity surrounding a councilmember's comments last week.

Additionally, investigations of the collapse by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Office of Inspector General (OIG) are ongoing and incomplete. OSHA's statutory deadline to issue a public report is within the next 90 days. Thus, any action taken by the Council, in the name of fact finding, prior to the completion of those investigations could have the unintended consequence of undermining the same. The Inspector General issued a letter to you today voicing those same concerns. To proceed under these circumstances would be reckless and irresponsible.

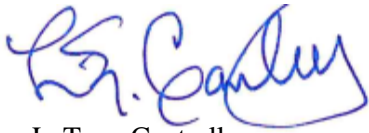
After three months of very hard work, we are closer than ever to the successful demolition of the structure. My administration has worked tirelessly every day since the hotel collapse to resolve this matter in the best interest of the City. Regardless of the stated intent of the meeting or the willingness of some of the Councilmembers to try and limit discussion, a special hearing specific to the Hard Rock collapse could lead to public displays in Council Chambers that are outside of the Council's ability to control.



To politicize the collapse at this time risks undermining the most recent progress and could further delay demolition of the site and inhibit the ability to conduct an appropriate investigation.

As always, I remain committed to a safe demolition, full transparency and absolute accountability for the responsible parties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LaToya Cantrell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "LaToya" and last name "Cantrell" clearly distinguishable.

LaToya Cantrell
Mayor

cc: Councilmember Joseph Giarrusso, District A
Councilmember Jay Banks, District B
Councilmember Kristin Gisleson Palmer, District C
Councilmember Jared Brossett, District D
Councilmember Cyndi Nguyen, District E