

WILLIAM MICHAEL DONOVAN FOR ALLENTOWN



City Council Candidate

Working to make
Allentown safe and prosperous

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Remarks by William Michael Donovan about the

Americus Building, May 9, 2007

Good morning and thank you for coming.

To promote the power of cooperation, today I stand here in two capacities. First, as a resident of Allentown, my opinion is that the Americus sitting behind me is a safety hazard, an embarrassment, and a clear example of what happens when absentee property owners do not care about our great city.

Because of this “I do not care” mentality, I speak with deep concern for pedestrians, automobile owners, neighboring tenants, and our first responders, who would have to fight a potentially disastrous fire. We must not allow the creation of such risk by anyone. It is, quite simply, morally unacceptable.

In contrast, motivated and responsible investors and property owners are welcomed in Allentown. They keep the community clean, offer ideas and resources, participate in events, help with problem-solving, and work collaboratively within a diverse city.

I wear a second hat as candidate for City Council. The Americus is a community-wide problem and thus needs a community solution. I call upon all stakeholders to come together and work to reach a successful answer to the impasse. These include the fire and police departments, the mayor, the council, corporate officers, Symphony Hall, other Americus neighbors, LVEDC, and even Mr. Mendelson. There are others, too, and I encourage those groups to come forward.

In particular, if Mr. Mendelson declines to provide an example of corporate responsibility, I urge the only remaining tenants -- the owners of those cell towers on the roof of this building -- to demonstrate their own ethical commitment to Allentown by relocating the antennas to other, nearby buildings with equal coverage or bluntly saying to Mr. Mendelson, “make a deal.” Wireless antenna rentals are cited on the web to bring in \$1,000 to \$1,800 per month. According to officials, the city has a contract on its property worth about \$15,000 per year. There seem to be many antennas up there! While we do not know the details of the Americus building, it seems probable to say that there is significant revenue passing from the wireless companies to Mr. Mendelson.

As a city council member, I would work with all of these stakeholders to encourage the mitigation of these safety violations and the restoration of what was once and can again be a shining beacon of downtown Allentown.

Every day I strive to teach our future business leaders that corporate responsibility is the key to a successful community. I urge

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the leaders of these cellular phone companies -- whom I know to be responsible corporate citizens -- to help our city.

I believe that if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic and sustainable responses to issues and opportunities. The Americus is an opportunity for Allentown. It is unethical to leave it in this state and to produce such risk of disaster. Various legal constraints exist. I will grant that. However, social responsibility is a virtue that can help break constraints and lead to creative solutions.

Let us eliminate this embarrassment. Let us encourage absentee landlords to become good citizens of Allentown. Let us discourage landlords who do not care. And most of all, let's make a commitment that any threat to our safety will be dealt with aggressively, collaboratively, and with optimism. Let us work for a safe and prosperous Allentown.