



To: Mayor Teresa Jacobs
From: Commissioner Ted Edwards, District 5
Date: April 22, 2014
Re: **Soccer-Specific Stadium**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ted", written over a horizontal line.

On April 16, 2014, Atlanta was named the home of the next Major League Soccer expansion team. The team will share an ownership group with the NFL's Atlanta Falcons and will play in the Falcon's new \$1.2 billion dollar, 71,029 seat, artificially turfed football stadium scheduled to begin construction this year. Approximately \$1 billion, or 83 percent of stadium construction costs, will be borne by the private sector.

Major League Soccer demanded that soccer in our community could not play in the Citrus Bowl but the standards for MLS required a soccer-specific stadium. During negotiations with the City of Orlando and Orange County, MLS made it clear that it would not award a franchise without a soccer-specific stadium. The league found the Citrus Bowl to be unsuitable for MLS play even though it is located in an urban area, has a natural playing surface, and will seat 6,000 fewer people than Atlanta's stadium. The Citrus Bowl is also undergoing a \$205 million renovation which made it an even more attractive option. As Orlando City Soccer President Phil Rawlins stated during the August 9 Tourist Development Council meeting, "[The Citrus Bowl] just doesn't fit for soccer. It's a very large facility. We're looking for a very intimate facility. More than we're looking for one, we've been told we have to have one. To bring Major League Soccer to this community we have to have an 18 to 25 thousand seat stadium with a grass field roof over the stands to cover the fans and an urban downtown location."

Evidently the soccer-specific stadium requirement was apparently a false and inaccurate statement by MLS. The new Atlanta stadium will far exceed MLS supposed seating requirements. The stadium will also feature an artificial playing surface inconsistent with league guidelines. I am concerned that MLS was in negotiations to place an expansion team in football facility stadium in Atlanta while simultaneously telling both Orlando and Orange County that the existing Citrus Bowl was inadequate. I am concerned about the league's apparent double standard on stadium requirements and am worried that they may have conducted stadium negotiations with us in bad faith. Therefore, I request that the board revisit the stadium issue during the May 6 open discussion. To the extent MLS made fraudulent statements to our community, it should be held accountable.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Cc: Board of County Commissioners
Ajit M. Lalchandani, County Administrator
Jeffrey Newton, County Attorney

COMMISSIONER TED B. EDWARDS, DISTRICT 5

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