



June 2, 2020

ATTN: Collen Nicol, Riverside City Clerk  
City of Riverside  
3900 Main St.  
Riverside, CA 92522

Dear Mayor and City Council,

I write to you today on behalf of Neighbors Better Together<sup>1</sup> (NBT), an association of representatives from many of Riverside's community groups, dedicated to creating networked conversations between residents and their local government with the goal of promoting fact-based decision-making on government policies affecting community issues that impact our shared vision for Riverside.

Our group approved without dissent on May 31st, 2020, to send this letter to you requesting, as part of Item 1g on today's City Council agenda, that the City terminate **with cause** our City Attorney, Gary Geuss' employment, based upon NBT's thorough review of the facts behind his involvement with the 2018 employment contract of former City Manager John Russo.

Subsequent to this action, we believe the City should seek through all avenues at its disposal to recover the ill-gotten proceeds from the judicially-reviewed and void Russo contract, including if necessary pursuing malpractice and civil fraud claims against Mr. Geuss for his improper behavior, and a referral to Riverside County D.A.'s office for potential criminal charges. At a bare minimum, we request the City Council refer the details of the Russo contract approval, execution, and funding to the Riverside County Grand Jury for a neutral review.

NBT believes there needs to accountability and lessons learned from this embarrassing and expensive fiasco, or the underlying issues that enabled it – e.g. conflicts-of-interest, self-dealing, abuse of power, influence peddling, intellectual laziness, etc. - will undoubtedly re-occur as we have experienced so many times in the past at City Hall. It is of the utmost importance that public confidence and faith in the governance and operations of its local institutions be restored and we think the above-mentioned suggestions will help to ensure that. We believe this principal – that the people need to be able to trust their government - given the current political climate, is as important now as ever to our Republic.

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<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: NBT is an independent group consisting of members from local, community-minded organizations. Opinions expressed by NBT do not necessarily reflect the views or goals of those organizations.



Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you collaboratively in the future towards making Riverside the true gem of the Inland Empire.

Sincerely,

Jason Hunter

NBT Chairman

Jehunter51@msn.com

Cc: Mayor William “Rusty” Bailey  
Councilmember Erin Edwards  
Councilmember Andy Melendrez  
Councilmember Ronaldo Fierro  
Councilmember Chuck Conder  
Councilmember Gabriela Plascencia  
Councilmember Jim Perry  
Councilmember Steve Hemenway