

### **Statement of City Manager Chuck Strome**

The City has always recognized Iona College's important place in our community and has valued and supported constructive dialogue about the College's growth and development. With regard to the present matter, it is the City's position that any merger of the lots on Beechmont Drive and Montgomery Place be subject to City approval pursuant to a public process and community input. The College insists that such merger be accomplished without City approval, public oversight, or formal community input. The City met with College officials on several occasions to discuss this issue, with the goal of achieving an amicable resolution. During those meetings and discussions, College representatives engaged in threatening and aggressive conduct in an effort to coerce and intimidate the City to allow the merger in clear violation of zoning law. The College specifically threatened to disparage City officials if the merger was not granted administratively. Based upon the conduct of the College, the City refused to participate in any further meetings on this issue. The City denied the administrative merger in accordance with zoning law, which resulted in the lawsuit that was filed last Friday.