



Were the #NewKCI Construction Cost Numbers Ever Real?

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By: *Patrick Tuohey*

Last Thursday on the Kansas City Public Television program [Ruckus](#), panelist Jim Heeter dropped the following bomb about the large increase in the cost of a new single terminal for Kansas City International Airport [start at 21:07],

A lot of us who looked at that [cost] issue closely at the time that voters approved [it] fully expected this. We expected it was going to be a bigger project than was approved at the time, so in that sense it is not a surprise.

When Ruckus host Mike Shanin pointed out that no one in the pro-airport campaign made this point at the time of the vote, [Heeter added](#) [start at 21:21],

I think the city needs to step forward and talk candidly with the public about these kinds of issues because there is a growing perceptual issue; that's really important.

Heeter is no ordinary pundit. He is a former member of the Kansas City Council and a former president of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. In 2017, [Heeter consulted for Jones Lang LaSalle](#), one of the four finalists to build the new KCI terminal. Heeter is the embodiment of the city establishment. He has held high-level positions both as a public official and with private sector entities at the heart of plans for the new terminal. If he “fully expected” that costs would increase, it strains credulity to think he was the only one.

Yet days before the 2017 election, Heeter appeared on Ruckus and toasted the “[fact-based campaign](#)” for a new KCI terminal. Heeter then cited the *Kansas City Star* editorial board’s call to “give the voters the facts they need to give an informed decision.”

The voters were not given the facts in 2017. The Show-Me Institute and others [made this very clear at the time](#). *The Star*, heralded by Heeter as wanting the facts, themselves [misreported the facts in their editorial endorsements](#). And Heeter himself, who then said that voters had been given all the facts, concedes now that he and others knew the numbers were, in fact, not factual.

The costs associated with a new terminal have been suspect since 2014, when Airport Terminal Advisory Group co-chairman David Fowler said, “[Any dollar amount placed on any alternative is almost pretty random](#).” It remains “pretty random” four years later. The people of Kansas City are right to be skeptical of their civic and political leaders on this issue; the latter have forfeited their credibility.

Tags:

- [KCI](#)

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