

Statement of Ald. Bob Donovan

April 9, 2009

So, a consultant's review that took a boat load of money (I've been told more than \$1 million) and 103 pages of text and fancy charts and graphs has found rampant waste and inefficiency in the non-instructional, overpaid bureaucratic morass of the Milwaukee Public Schools. For years I have pointed out the many symptoms the ill patient (MPS) has exhibited; now a high-priced doctor has confirmed that "yes," the patient is quite ill and in dire need of strong medicine.

The report – completed at the behest of Governor Doyle, Mayor Barrett and DPI chief Elizabeth Burmaster – methodically details waste that should have been discovered years ago by the overpaid bureaucrats who've been running the system. Reading the findings makes me shudder to think what waste is going on in various other levels of Milwaukee government, and that maybe we should order a similar consultant study of the city, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, MATC and on and on.

The revelation that there are 65 central office MPS bureaucrats making more than \$100,000 per year is appalling, not to mention the Pentagonesque shocker that the district was buying \$100 pencil sharpeners. It seems not only is MPS devoid of checks and balances to ensure performance management (\$100K staffers in a failing system?! What do these staffers do to earn that kind of pay?) but the purchasing procedures haven't exactly been stellar in the district either. I wouldn't be surprised if some budding entrepreneurs aren't now contemplating going into business so they can sell MPS \$800 pencil boxes.

The report talks about the state DPI having the authority to order MPS to take "corrective action" because the district has been identified as "in need of improvement" for two years in a row. Things have been messed up at MPS for years and years, so where was the urgency on the part of DPI years ago, when it was clear it could have invoked this kind of authority?

It's clear that the next superintendent of MPS needs to be capable of running a billion dollar corporation, and must be able and empowered to cut waste and inefficiency whenever and wherever it is found. I hope that authority is granted and that it results in an all-encompassing house cleaning that is years overdue.

Lastly, the report talks about the roles of the school board and the superintendent. It puts a heaping helping of hope that those who govern MPS will embrace and proceed with needed reforms and wide-ranging changes that will be coming forth from the mayor, the governor, the DPI, and others. And there's a clear "or else" from the mayor and the governor that those governing MPS better get the house in order or something might happen.

I wonder if that "something" could be a mayoral takeover, which I have called for for some time.

-More-

A true governance overhaul at MPS would be a welcome change for me and for many of the thousands of hard working Milwaukee taxpayers who deserve better than the current confederacy of dunces now running the show.

###