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FOR INFORMATION CALL

December 18, 2012

Ald. Robert J. Bauman

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Ald. Terry L. Witkowski

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Common Council approves long-awaited Historic Preservation revisions

The Milwaukee Common Council Tuesday morning signed off on revisions to the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance aimed at clarifying and streamlining the process for obtaining permission to do work on historic sites, as well as updating other procedures. **Alderman Robert J. Bauman** and **Alderman Terry L. Witkowski** co-authored the compromise revisions.

"These updates mark the first major overhaul of our historic preservation laws in 30 years," Alderman Bauman said, "and they are almost two years of hard work in the making themselves. I'm very pleased that we were able to find a way to address the concerns of developers while respecting the needs of the historic preservation community."

The highlight of the revisions is a complete overhaul of the procedure for obtaining a "certificate of appropriateness," or CoA, which is the permit required to perform various types of work (including demolition) on designated historic buildings, historic sites and buildings within historic districts. Also included are updates that provide the Department of Neighborhood Services with enforcement powers to prevent "demolition by neglect," requirements for developers seeking to demolish a historic structure and develop on the site to prove they have the needed financial resources, and language establishing an economic hardship standard and review procedure for the owners of historic buildings, historic sites and buildings in historic districts.

Alderman Witkowski said he believes the revised Historic Preservation Ordinance is "a major improvement" from its previous form, offering efficiencies and features that will help interested parties meet necessary requirements.

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Historic preservation revisions/ADD ONE

“I know at the outset there were some who said ‘the ordinance is fine as is—it doesn’t need to be changed,’” Alderman Witkowski said. “The fact is that it did need some updates, and I think the new language will help make timelines and expectations clearer for developers and property owners.”

Alderman Witkowski said he is also pleased with the economic hardship provision (which clearly lays out how a property owner should apply for hardship, and how a case will need to be made and proven) and the fact that the Common Council will now have the ability to take cases from the HPC if need be.

In other business Tuesday morning, the Common Council passed a measure that draws \$900,000 from the city’s Contingent Fund to replace failing video recording devices in Milwaukee Police Department patrol cars. Of 169 vehicles equipped with the devices, MPD reports that more than 80 percent of them are currently experiencing unacceptable rates of failure.