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ROBERT G. DONOVAN
Alderman, 8th District

Blaming and criticizing job creating businesses is a dumb thing to do

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
April 16, 2013**

While I respect that some of my colleagues think differently, I think the elected officials (including some members of the Common Council) who needlessly criticized and prodded Palermo's yesterday (in a naïve letter to the company AND during a City Hall news conference) made a major mistake for two reasons. First of all, based on my review, both immigration and labor officials have ruled in favor of the company, which is located in my 8th Aldermanic District. Second, we send businesses a terrible message when we criticize and blame companies that are creating jobs in our community. My colleagues were right in praising Palermo's for all it has done to benefit our community, but jumping on the company based on unproven allegations hurts the City of Milwaukee and the very people we are elected to represent. Protesters can scream, shout and pound the table, and that usually means that they don't have the facts on their side. Well, both the law and the facts support Palermo's, and what would truly be in the best interest of our community would be to let the process take its normal course rather than use the issue as a way to score political points.

To be clear, I find it ironic that despite the fact that Palermo's is in my district, I was unaware of the joint letter (signed by six of my colleagues) sent to the company yesterday, asking that the company meet with the (non-existent) "union" so that a "settlement" can be reached. Needless to say, I also find it ironic that I was not told about the news conference held at City Hall yesterday.

Let's face it, Palermo's has been a pioneer in creating jobs in the Menomonee Valley, and it is unfortunate that simply making inflammatory claims and unsubstantiated allegations is how some choose to conduct their business. In addition, the primary organizing entity working against Palermo's – Voces de la Frontera – has bizarrely canceled meetings that it has set up with me to discuss the issues!

Further, I wonder how many of my colleagues who are siding with a non-existent union (Palermo's Workers Union) have actually taken the time to meet or talk with Giacomo Fallucca of Palermo's, just to listen to his thoughts on the issues? My colleagues should be mature enough to know that there are always at least two sides to every story!

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(I also must say that I am very disappointed in the mayor for his unwillingness to stand up for one of our best corporate citizens. Leaders are supposed to make tough decisions, but the mayor simply punted).

My colleagues who are speaking up on this issue seem to suddenly be stepping forward to exert some political leadership on an issue, and maybe we're seeing the dawn of a new day here in Milwaukee. Sorry, but I am doubtful. In my opinion, I think this really is just a "flavor of the day" issue for most of them, and when I'm out front as usual on pressing issues facing the city, I will continue to look behind me and see no one there joining me.

Lastly, instead of jumping into the fray in my district, on an issue that affects the future of a solid, job creating Milwaukee company, I strongly suggest Alderman Zielinski stick to his district and to things he knows well, such as dog parks.