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Alderman, 8th District

# Commission's decision to reconsider should not be based on pressure

## Statement of Alderman Bob Donovan December 7, 2012

I am very disappointed that a mob of angry citizens has apparently persuaded the Fire and Police Commission to reconsider its decision to reinstate Police Officer Richard Schoen.

The Fire and Police Commission was originally created, at least in part, to remove the possibility of "mob mentality" and/or political influence from affecting its decisions. Unfortunately, it looks very much to me like that is exactly what is happening now with the case of Officer Schoen.

First, let me be clear: I did not attend the hearing for Officer Schoen, and I cannot state either way whether he deserved to be reinstated or whether his firing should have been upheld. But a large number of people who did not attend the officer's hearing before the Commission are having no problem basing their entire conviction and condemnation of him based on the four or five seconds of video footage that is being continuously looped on local TV news. Please – our system is based on a fair hearing and testimony, where evidence is presented and witnesses are questioned (and at the end of that thorough process the Commission voted to reinstate Officer Schoen). It is NOT and should not be conducted based on the cries and shouts of an angry mob!

If the Commission has come across new evidence in the Schoen case, then I have no problem with it reconsidering the decision. But if the Commission is succumbing to outside pressure, then I believe it is setting a very dangerous precedent.

Lastly, I would like to address a few issues that were brought forth last night when the crowd disrupted the Commission's meeting at City Hall.

The individuals who used profanity and foul language simply ought to be ashamed of themselves. That was appalling. I remember a time when swearing in the presence of an officer (much less the Chief!) would get a person a ticket for disorderly conduct

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People last night were also raising the names of other individuals who have died in custody, and I believe doing so is a disservice to the community. Lumping all of these cases together makes no sense to me, especially when one considers that each case has its own set of circumstances and unique features. In many respects these cases have absolutely nothing in common, and I sincerely hope that the community sees how this lumping together of separate cases is simply flawed and unproductive.

Finally, I heard one individual describe the Milwaukee Police Department as being the modern equivalent of the KKK. This assertion is ridiculous, and this person should be ashamed of himself!

Each year Milwaukee police officers engage tens of thousands of citizens during their shifts, with very few problems or issues. The vast majority of our officers are hard working, fair and honest individuals who perform a very difficult job. In my opinion, the person who made that statement did a disservice to our city and to the men and women of the Milwaukee Police Department.