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**JAMES A. BOHL, JR.**

Alderman, 5th District

# **Council colleague cooking up absurdity over closing of Mama's Italian Cuisine**

## **Statement of Alderman Jim Bohl**

**April 22, 2015**

Today, a Common Council colleague of mine put out a press release purporting to offer “the real story” behind the closing of Mama’s Italian Cuisine, a business that operated in the 5th Aldermanic District until its closure this past weekend. While I share this colleague’s much-voiced concerns about this year’s uptick in violent crime throughout the city, I don’t think that affords him the right to seize upon mistaken notions about “out-of-control crime” in certain neighborhoods, and I want to set the record straight. Any notion that the area around Mama’s is a dangerous, crime-ridden neighborhood is absurd on its face.

Unfortunately, my colleague seems to have developed a pattern of throwing statements against the wall to see what sticks, and does so without checking into or always having a firm grasp of the facts. While there are occasions where I agree with his assertions, there are also times when I am left shaking my head at his unique flavor of hyperbole which sounds great, but misses the mark.

The unfortunate thing through it all, however, is that he doesn’t care whether or not something is factual, just so long as someone tells him it is so. He told me so much today.

I have a great deal of respect for Tony Pipito, a dedicated entrepreneur and a stalwart of the West Side for decades. I’m grateful for his investment in the neighborhood, and I’m truly sorry he was unable to continue doing business. I certainly wish him only the best.

Twenty to 25 years ago, my sister worked at this restaurant. I remember a time when it was so busy, patrons would wait 45 minutes or more for a table on a Friday night. However, as a representative of the area on the Common Council for 15 years and a homeowner in the area for more than 20 years, I can point out a number of factors that I believe have played a greater role in the restaurant’s struggles over the past decade.

There was a time when Mama Mia’s was one of just a few restaurants in the West Side-Wauwatosa corridor. Since that time, a number of new restaurants have opened up near Mayfair, along North Avenue in Tosa, in the Tosa Village and along Capitol Drive, giving West-siders and area residents a wider array of options—and creating unprecedented competition for residents’ dining dollars. This would be the biggest factor, in my view, behind this respected, long-standing establishment’s unfortunate demise.

But, in his zeal to stoke the flames of controversy, my colleague has seized upon and regurgitated a few mischaracterized quotes, labeling this area as foreboding and dangerous. If we’re being honest, I would gladly put the neighborhood around Mama’s up against *any* neighborhood in the 8th Aldermanic District, in terms of public safety. As such, perhaps my colleague is better served focusing on his own district and spending less time worrying about everyone else’s.

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