



Ashanti Hamilton
City of Milwaukee Common Council

Statement on the Mayor's appointment of Denise Bartlett

Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton
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Today, the Council voted not to confirm Mayor Barrett's most recent nominee to the Fire and Police Commission. After a lengthy time of testimony and questioning, one thing became apparent. This candidate was not adequately prepared by the administration to go through this appointment process, and was not advised on the best way to advocate for her candidacy before members of the Common Council.

In discussion of this item, members of the Common Council made points similar to those made about the previous nominee that came before our body. Neither understood the true weight and responsibility that comes with serving on this commission. This failure is not incumbent on them. It is the failure of the administration to make sure that this responsibility was clear, and that she was prepared to face the questions and comments that would be made in the Council and community.

Alderman Bauman correctly stated the importance of the Fire and Police Commission. Not only is it the most powerful body of its kind in the State, it is one of the most powerful in the entire country. Common Council members themselves do not have oversight abilities over the Fire and Police Departments. The powers of the commission are unparalleled, and they are tasked with making difficult decisions and providing directives to two of the most important public safety and health departments in the city. Serving on the FPC is a responsibility that should not be casually regarded.

As such, it is unacceptable for the Mayor to put forth candidates who have limited awareness of the responsibilities of their potential position and marginal understanding of some of the most pressing public safety and health issues currently under deliberation. Our residents deserve better and the nominees deserve better.

To Ms. Bartlett, I wish you well. Thank you for your commitment to this very public and arduous process. It was a tough situation and you handled it with candor and character. However, you should never have been put into this position. We expect that the Mayor will be more thoughtful in his vetting and selection of subsequent employees to avoid the unfortunate spectacle that occurred today.