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TONY ZIELINSKI
ALDERMAN, 14TH DISTRICT

Strauss debacle a reflection of Mayor's overall fiscal irresponsibility and failure to plan

Statement of Alderman Tony Zielinski October 23, 2019

The vast and mostly vacant Century City business park is a stark reminder to Milwaukee residents of the fiscal carelessness and failure to plan by Mayor Barrett.

The failure has been front and center (and very public) during the past few days with support for the proposed move to Century City by Strauss Brands completely evaporating after protests about the development surfaced. Instead of holding well-publicized public hearings to vet the proposal, the administration tried to quietly squeak the proposed meat processing (slaughter house) operation through.

There was no planning or strategy about what might happen if the proposal hit the rocks, so when it failed and Strauss announced it would not build the facility the administration tried to nurse its wounds by pointing the finger at the Council and blaming a "misinformation campaign" by opponents.

It is very troubling that the City of Milwaukee has poured \$40 million into Century City – a development which I voted against – and only has 50 jobs to show for it!

I voted against it because my position was (and still is) that it would be irresponsible for the city to move forward on developing Century City without having a major tenant for the site already in the fold. Developers don't build major office buildings or other developments without tenants already on board and it is careless and irresponsible for the city to not also have that approach.

And people wonder why the city doesn't have the money to fix roads, hire additional police officers or adequately address lead hazards in our neighborhoods!

To me the \$40 million Century City mess is fiscal mismanagement by the Mayor and his administration at a disturbing level. Precious city resources that have been mishandled and frittered away as thousands of our citizens need and deserve stable and well-paying jobs.

Where are the tech and innovative start-up companies we should be welcoming to Century City? Why are we courting a meatpacking company for a site where the development plan prohibited slaughter houses?!

These are germane questions for Mayor Barrett, and hopefully he is working on a plan to answer them.

But I strongly doubt he is.