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ROBERT G. DONOVAN
ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

IF IT'S NOT ABOUT THE STREETCAR AND DOESN'T IMPACT DOWNTOWN, THE MAYOR HAS LOST INTEREST

*In addition, regarding a few other matters, Mayor Barrett is not in compliance with state law
and no one seems to care*

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan June 25, 2019

Last week, Ald. Mark Borkowski and I held a press conference in the wake of the tragic death of Officer Kou Her. We were hoping – it would seem foolishly – to inspire Mayor Tom Barrett to a sense of urgency and lead this community in the problem of reckless driving. Instead of reaching out and trying to build relationships with the Common Council that might lead to real solutions to a real problem, the Mayor chose to turn his own press conference into an attack on Ald. Borkowski and myself. He even went so far as to suggest that Ald. Borkowski and I, by our remarks, had disrespected the men and women of the Milwaukee Police Department.

Wow.

Ald. Borkowski and I have our critics. Some are fair-minded and some are not. Of all the things of which we have been accused, however, disrespect for the police officers who risk their lives for the residents of this City, has never before been one of them. This is the strange level to which the rhetoric of a Mayor long out of touch with anything that does not look like a streetcar has sunk.

Let me, briefly, share some facts:

*Our neighborhoods, those places outside the limits of the Downtown where the Mayor rarely goes, are experiencing a level of decay that is unsustainable. Our roads are riddled with potholes and are left unrepaired. We set aside next to nothing for alleys. Our streetlights are not replaced in a timely manner. And litter, left uncollected, is spoiling what was once known as one of the world's cleanest cities. And let's not forget the increasing number of burned out, abandoned and decaying properties plaguing those same neighborhoods. And I haven't even mentioned crime.

-More-

City Hall Room 205 • 200 East Wells Street • Milwaukee, WI 53202

PHONE (414) 286-3533

FAX (414) 286-3456

E-MAIL rdonov@milwaukee.gov

WEBSITE www.milwaukee.gov/district8



*Our Department of Neighborhood Services has been without a regular commissioner since mid-January. I appreciate Mr. Thomas Mishefske's efforts filling in as acting Commissioner, but surely, by now, the Mayor should have found a permanent Commissioner. Similarly, as I reminded the Mayor in November 2018, the City has been without a Director of Homeland Security since June of last year. As I said at the time: "(u)nder ch. 323, Wis. Stats., and ch. 6 of the Milwaukee Charter, this position is vested with a broad range of responsibilities in the event of an emergency – responsibilities particularly relating to coordination and communication among our various levels of government and our own first responders." I am surprised the Democratic National Committee was willing to overlook a vacancy of this significance when it chose Milwaukee for its 2020 convention, planning for which is already under way.

Both of these positions are at the cabinet level and s. 62.51(2), Wis.Stats., obligates the mayor to appoint all the members of his or her cabinet with 90 days of a vacancy. And yet they remain unfilled.

*The Mayor seems incapable of selecting a candidate for the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners who can receive the majority support of the Common Council. Twice in recent months his candidate has been rejected making a mockery of the Mayor's attempt to increase this vital body's membership from seven to nine. All this is, of course, happening as the Executive Director of the Board is herself preparing to leave with no indication as to who her replacement will be.

Governing is not about popularity. It is not about ribbon-cuttings and downtown dinners. It is hard work that requires effort, patience, and a willingness to work towards compromise with those who differ with you. It also requires a level of attention that, if the subject isn't the streetcar or the downtown, Mayor Barrett seems to lack. It has become increasingly apparent to me that, at least as things relate to our neighborhoods and the issues I've previously mentioned, the Barrett years will be remembered (in the words of Winston Churchill) as "the years the locusts ate".