

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

CHAIR

- Public Safety and Health

MEMBER

- Community and Economic Development
- Steering and Rules
- Anti-Graffiti Policy



ROBERT G. DONOVAN
ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

What Is Going On With the Fire and Police Commission?

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
December 16, 2019**

One of these weeks, we will all head into a weekend without some new report of disorder or other trouble with the Fire and Police Commission.

It's been a while.

We all knew the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners was well below its nine members, that members were serving past the expiration of their terms, and Mayor Tom Barrett had struggled to nominate new members who could be confirmed by the Common Council.

We all heard about a disturbing level of staff resignations -- two of which were followed by letters filled with incendiary allegations of mismanagement. This, combined with a number of employees being dismissed, has left the Commission with roughly half of its budgeted workers.

And we were all told that the disarray within the office had led to important promotion lists being delayed not for months, but years.

Now, just this past Friday, the *Journal Sentinel* reported that the Chair of the Commission is in no hurry to confirm Police Chief Alfonso Morales to a four-year term. I like Mr. DeVougas and think he has done a good job as both a member of the Commission and as its chair, but I cannot understand his lack of urgency. The failure of the Commission to re-appoint Chief Morales has injected a note of uncertainty into a department that can ill afford it. The Chief is a "cop's cop", a straight-shooter, and has earned another term. I will note that just a few weeks ago I spoke directly to Commissioner DeVougas and he told me he saw no problem with confirming Chief Morales to a new term. If there is something about him or his record that any member of the Commission knows that the public does not, they should say so. If they do not, this is just needless delay.

-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



Also on Friday, a local blog reported that Ms. Griselda Aldrete, the Commission's executive director, may not have been truthful on the resume she submitted to the Mayor and the Common Council prior to her confirmation. The head of the Department of Employee Relations appeared to confirm the substance of the story when she said there was a discrepancy and a revised resume would be submitted. This might seem a minor thing, but the discrepancy seems to be whether or not Ms. Aldrete taught the criminal justice classes at the Milwaukee Area Technical College she said she did. This is important because those classes were some of the only real-world experience Ms. Aldrete could claim that related directly to the position to which she was nominated.

And this blog post followed an investigative piece by WISN radio's Dan O'Donnell in which he interviewed a representative of a group of former investigators for the Fire and Police Commission. The subject of the interview alleged that, under political pressure, the Commission has lowered the standards used during background checks and that may have allowed people with questionable histories to pass. When questions of this sort are raised, the Common Council and the community need to know it can trust Commission staff to answer honestly and directly.

I said this when the dysfunction at the Milwaukee Health Department was exposed nearly two years ago and I will say it now: Milwaukee deserves better than this. It deserves credible leadership and functioning oversight agencies. This is why I will urge my colleagues to open a formal investigation into the Fire and Police Commission and what is going on in that office. I and many of my colleagues long ago lost faith in the ability of the Barrett administration to remedy the problems it regularly seems to cause. Once again the task of compensating for his willful negligence falls to us.

-30-