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ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

Will No One Have the Courage and Good Sense to Postpone the Spring General Election?

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan March 31, 2020

From the day I first decided to run for office, I have believed that one of the highest tasks set before an elected official is the protection of the public. I have tried to do this by listening, studying, and making the best decisions I could.

I also have always prided myself on telling people the truth – pleasant or otherwise.

The unpleasant truth we all now face is that the Spring General Election, still unwisely set for April 7, cannot be conducted safely.

Just last night, Election Commissioner Neil Albrecht told us all that he has fewer than 400 of the more than 1,400 poll workers he usually relies on to make this election work. This can hardly be a surprise. Our poll workers, to whom I have always been grateful, often come from the ranks of our senior citizens and many are at great risk from the pandemic. Others with compromised immune systems or other issues are prudently declining to serve. That leaves the City to search for options including, again according to Mr. Albrecht, an even stronger emphasis on absentee balloting and the creation of voting centers where many polling places are merged into one.

The polling center idea strikes me as madness at a time of pandemic. Efficient under normal circumstances, this can only be an invitation to spread a disease that has already sickened and killed too many. Moreover, our poll workers will have to be supplied with scarce personal protective equipment that would be better used by our first responders and other front-line personnel.

And absentee balloting is no proper substitute for in-person voting. Leaving to the side the local and even state and federal races on the ballot, there are significant policy questions being put that cannot be properly decided by what will be a rump electorate.

It is a great pity that our politics have so devolved that the Governor and the Legislature cannot resolve this matter in the public interest. At times like these I am very glad that I serve in a non-partisan office because neither party is doing the public any favors. I would ask those responsible to see reason on this matter before a cloud of illegitimacy is hung over all the results of this election and even more harm is done to the health of the public.

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