



**CHAIR**

- Public Safety & Health Committee

**VICE CHAIR**

- Finance and Personnel Committee

**MEMBER**

- Licenses Committee
- Steering and Rules Committee
- Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees
- Administrative Review Board of Appeals

## **A Call to Action: Asks of the School Board**

### **Alderman Scott Spiker**

**June 13, 2024**

**[Alderman Spiker will be available to discuss these items (and more) before and after the meeting, and to do so out at Central Services.]**

- Don't TAX TO THE MAX.
  - When the referendum passed (by 1.7%) it merely AUTHORIZED the school board to raise the tax levy by \$140 million this year. It in no way REQUIRES the school board to raise the tax levy...not even a penny.
  - Given that the taxpayer was unaware of the financial troubles of MPS when the referendum was passed, it makes sense to give them some of their money back. We should get our financial house in order before we move ahead and add an addition onto it! Thus, the School Board should restrain itself from raising taxes as much as the outcome of the referendum allows them to. Don't "tax to the max."
- Hide \$50 million under your mattress.
  - Due to the incompetence of the former superintendent, the financial division working under him, and the oversight body—that would be the School Board—we have NO idea how much money the State will seek to claw back owing to the flawed 2022/23 financial data for MPS.
  - It would be prudent, therefore, to place *at least* \$50 million to one side in the budget for the day, which will be here before you know it, when the State shows up at our door asking for its money back. We would be wise to



have it in a fund reserved for that purpose. We should not spend it in this budget.

- If we don't do this, when the State comes looking for its money, we will have to find \$50 million in cuts somewhere or we will have to raise taxes further (if allowed to do so).
  
- Delay a vote on the budget until the end of June.
  - Statutorily, the budget doesn't have to be passed until June 30. And as Director Leonard pointed out, the final budget isn't set until October!
  - Given that we still have no idea how much money we will owe the State when they come knocking (see above), it would be imprudent in the extreme to pass a budget at this point. Waiting until the end of the month would allow us to a) devise a better estimate of the size of the cut to general aids that MPS will experience, and b) come up with a plan for what we are going to cut to get us to that number.
  
- Make way for the special commissioner if you rush the vote on the budget through.
  - If you pass the budget without delaying it long enough for questions (a) and (b) above to be answered, you are rolling out the red carpet for a takeover by a special commissioner at the hands of the Legislature.
  - If you think that the Governor's veto will protect you, remember this: MPS's financial errors will cost every other school district in the state time and money, as the State cannot determine how much aid they will get until they reckon MPS's share, and the mistake with the 2022/23 financial data you reported to DPI will have taken money from every other district in the State. Asking outstate Democrats to hold firm in the face of that realization by their electorate is asking a lot...too much, I believe.

