

David A. Kuemmel, P.E.
8841 W. Holt Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53227
543-8645

June 8, 2004

To the Honorable Committee on Finance and Personnel

RE: CC File # 04-0131
Proposed Charter Ordinance to repeal the requirement that
Commissioner of Public Works of the City of Milwaukee
must be a registered professional engineer.

I believe the proposal to rescind the requirement for a Professional Engineer for the Commissioner of Public Works (CPW) would not be good for the Department of Public Works, nor good for the City.

This requirement was added by the Common Council in February, 1966, at the original request of the Engineers and Scientists of Milwaukee (ESM), soon to celebrate its 100th birthday as the first engineering society in Milwaukee.

In a letter from the Department of Public Works dated December 29, 1965, signed by Herbert A. Goetsch, then Commissioner, it was pointed out that this had been the practice for the past 30 years prior to the adoption of a Charter Ordinance. It has been the practice now for at least 68 years.

The file also contains the responsibilities of the Commissioner. It could be summed up by stating that the Commissioner of Public Works is responsible for most of the physical facilities of the City that provide for the transportation, environmental and structural infrastructure that make this city vital. These facilities have a replacement cost of over \$8 billion in today's dollar.

In addition, the CPW is also the chief contracting officer for the department. As such the CPW also hires engineering consultants and the registration of all parties under such circumstances serves to enhance the mutual confidence and respect. The code of ethics to which the registered engineer adheres gives assurance to the public of the technical competence of the office.

Many of the duties of subordinates in the department require the application of engineering principles wherein the safeguarding of life, health or property is concerned, or service of the type for which registration is required in private practice.

The registration of a CPW offers legal protection to the City in the event of possible law suits involving public works. It also lends general assurance that the public is securing competent technical service for the leader providing public works services. I believe the public is entitled to such assurance of technical qualifications in this area of services.

Looking ahead to the major public works challenges facing the city, such as the issue of separation of the combined sewers within the city, the quality of river and lake water and the fiscal issue of preservation of infrastructure under declining tax revenues, it seems to me that it would be ill advised to remove the technical qualifications of the Commissioner of Public Works in these trying times. I know there are competent people within and outside of the Department who can meet these qualifications. I know that for most of the last 70 year history of this position, when the Mayor appointed an individual from within the department, that person served with distinction. In the last 40 years, three of the last five Commissioners won the American Public Works Association's "Top 10 Public Works Administrators of the Year" award. Had the last person who held the job served a few years longer than he did, I believe he, too, would have received that award.

In my case, I am a city resident, a retired city employee who served 6 years as Commissioner and a

concerned engineering professional who is a fellow of ASCE and ITE, and a member of NSPE, WSPE, APWA and a member and Past President of ESM.

I have chosen to remain in the City after retirement, because I love this city, and want to see its reputation as a great place continue. I therefore request that this charter ordinance be placed on file by your honorable committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David A. Kuemmel".

David A. Kuemmel, P.E.
City Resident.