



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

July 15, 2011

To the Honorable, the Common Council
of the City of Milwaukee

Honorable Members of the Common Council:

I am vetoing File Number 101142, a substitute resolution authorizing participation in the National League of Cities' Service Line Warranty Program, administered and managed by Utility Service Partners, Inc.

The National League of Cities is a respected organization and a valued partner that advocates on behalf of municipalities, and brings forth innovative solutions to shared issues and concerns. Its efforts are appreciated.

Working with Alderman Davis and the City Attorney, Utility Service Partners, Inc. has made numerous revisions to its policy in response to the concerns of the City of Milwaukee. However, I am exercising my veto authority for the following reasons:


1. The need for the policy is limited. There are very few catastrophic failures of water or sewer laterals in the City of Milwaukee. For example, in 2010 there were 142 failed water laterals that were the responsibility of the property owner to repair; there are over 130,000 water laterals in the City of Milwaukee. There were 207 failures of sewer laterals which were the responsibility of the property owner to repair; there are over 200,000 sewer laterals in the City of Milwaukee. Many property owners will be buying coverage for a very low probability occurrence.
2. The benefits of the policy may be confusing to the public, especially as they relate to the relationship of sewer laterals and basement flooding. Sewer laterals can contribute to rain water entering the sewer system. As identified by the Flooding Task Force, the repair of a limited number of sewer laterals will not solve basement flooding; solutions need to be identified on a larger scale in order to make progress with flooding concerns.
3. The requirement for the company to utilize the city's brand in its marketing effort is unnecessary. The firm can reach out to residents without the City's imprimatur.

As a City policy, in order to identify the most qualified and responsible vendors, the procurement of professional services requires solicitation of multiple vendors and a competitive selection process. While Utility Service Partners, Inc. appears to be a responsible company, and NLC has approved this service line, other companies were not solicited and we cannot compare products and service models. A number of firms offer water and sewer lateral warranties. Some of these companies have approached the City of Milwaukee and expressed their desire to compete for this work. A competitive process should be used to select a vendor for these services if, in fact, these services are desired.

Based on the above reasons, I ask that you sustain my veto.

Aldermen Davis and Wade have raised important issues and concerns. It is my desire to continue working with them to reach a mutually agreeable resolution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and a stylized "B".

Tom Barrett
Mayor