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CHAIR:

- Finance & Personnel Committee
- Milwaukee Arts Board
- Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board
- Employees' Retirement System Investment Committee

MEMBER:

- Zoning, Neighborhoods & Development
- Steering & Rules Committee

November 20, 2008

Dear Justice Butler,

Thank you for chairing the Alcohol Beverage Licensing Task Force. Your presence and leadership on the committee ensures its quality, competence and thoroughness. The State of Wisconsin has entrusted the alderpersons of the City of Milwaukee with great regulatory power over alcohol licenses. It is essential that this power is not misused or exercised through an opaque process. Recommendations from your committee will undoubtedly help to restore the integrity of the alcohol licensing process. As the senior member of the Common Council, I respectfully submit recommendations for your committee to consider.

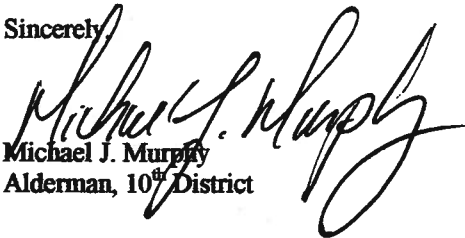
I receive several contacts weekly from prospective alcohol beverage licensees. A significant number of these applicants wrongly believe that the local alderperson possesses the power to grant or deny their application. Because of their misunderstanding, I am put in the awkward position of telling these applicants that I do not support their license application, but that they are entitled to a hearing before a committee constructed of my peers. It is important that the License Division provide these prospective applicants with an informational sheet that details their rights throughout the licensing process. This "Bill of Rights" could succinctly inform applicants of what they should expect throughout the licensing process.

Another important aspect of the application process is the information that the Licenses Committee receives from the Milwaukee Police Department. The details of police activities at a location are perhaps the most significant contributors to the decision to not renew an alcohol beverage license. It is crucial that the information given to the committee from the police department presents information that meets the special needs of the committee. A police report that provides detailed information on the role of the representative of the alcohol beverage establishment during a police visit would help the committee to fully understand the responsiveness of the establishment.

In renewing, suspending or revoking alcohol beverage licenses, developing objective standards would assist the Common Council. Creating a point system as an enforcement mechanism for these unbiased expectations would be a positive step. The Common Council would determine the point values for certain offenses. Based upon convictions, establishments would receive demerit points. When these points reached levels set by the Common Council, this would trigger a mechanism for the revocation or suspension of the license. This point system could be enacted with a provision that ensured the ability of the Common Council to use its discretionary power.

No matter what suggestions your committee might formulate, I trust that you will find recommendations that, if enacted, will restore public confidence in the licensing process. If I can lend support in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,


Michael J. Murphy
Alderman, 10th District