

CC# 040131

To: Alderman Zielinski, 14th Aldermanic District
✓ Alderman Michael Murphy, Chair F&P

RE: Proposed Charter Ordinance to repeal the requirement that Commissioner of Public Works of the City of Milwaukee be a registered professional engineer.

I am opposed to this change to the Charter Ordinance, noting the history of why the requirement is necessary for the position:

This requirement was added by the Common Council in February, 1966, at the request of the Engineers and Scientists of Milwaukee (ESM). 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 CPW is responsible for the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of street and highway facilities, including bridges, all storm and sanitary sewers, all water treatment and distribution facilities, all electrical facilities and a system of wired and fiber-optic communications facilities for fire, police and emergency service facilities, all street trees, city playgrounds, on and off street parking facilities, and the municipal equipment and vehicular fleet and over 200 city buildings and their structural, electrical and mechanical facilities. The CPW appoints division heads (with the exception of the City Engineer) who carry out these many activities. The CPW is also responsible for garbage collection, recycling and garbage disposal. 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 they also hire 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 its 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 it would be ill advised to remove the technical qualifications of the Commissioner of Public Works in these trying times.



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