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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Russell W. Stamper, II
(414) 286-2659
Pres. Ashanti Hamilton
(414) 286-3272

Bolstered city workforce development measure pushes forward

A Common Council ordinance has been drafted that would significantly reinforce the city's ability to put unemployed or underemployed people to work, while also better ensuring economic opportunities for small and locally-owned businesses.

The proposal will be discussed tomorrow, **Thursday, May 26** by the **Workforce Organizational Reform Committee (WORC)** when it meets at **10 a.m.** at Employ Milwaukee, 2342 N. 27th St. (room 118). WORC Chair **Alderman Russell W. Stamper, II** will be joined by **Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton** to discuss the measure during a news conference at 9:45 a.m. Thursday outside the Employ Milwaukee building (2342 N. 27th St.). **Media coverage is invited.**

Alderman Stamper said the city – and especially the downtown area – has seen a significant amount of new development in recent months, with some estimates of the total value of these projects at approximately \$3 billion. “This surge in new development connected with the new arena, Northwestern Mutual, and other projects represents a generational opportunity to provide employment, career development and economic opportunities for city workers and locally-owned and operated smaller businesses,” he said.

“The changes in the ordinance also significantly boost the opportunity for people to learn valuable skills while working as an apprentice or as a trainee – something that wasn't offered under our original RPP program,” Alderman Stamper said.

President Hamilton said the move by the Common Council to bolster the Residents Preference Program (RPP) is meant to hold the city accountable to achieve the goals of its various workforce development and economic participation initiatives (RPP, SBE-Small Business Enterprise, LBE-Local Business Enterprise).

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Putting Milwaukee to work/ADD ONE

“We recognized that we needed to do a much better job at providing these critical employment and skill opportunities for people who need it the most, and that is what the changes (in the ordinance) are designed to produce,” President Hamilton said.

The measure that will be discussed Thursday by the WORC includes the following **significant changes** to the city’s workforce development and economic participation initiatives:

- The 5-year qualification period for RPP workers is removed and the amount of time a person needs to be unemployed to qualify for the RPP program is shortened. These changes make it easier for residents to 1) become RPP qualified and 2) remain RPP qualified.
- Developers and contractors are required to hire one-quarter of RPP workers from the impoverished areas of the City of Milwaukee and are required to hire a certain percentage of apprentices or on-the-job trainees.
- Incentives are created to promote the use of RPP workers, SBEs and LBEs by contractors and developers. These incentives include:
 - An additional award standard for LBEs who are also SBEs.
 - Credits awarded for exceeding the required percentage of workers hired from impoverished areas or hired as apprentices/on-the-job trainees.
- Contractors or developers unable to meet the requirements of the RPP program are allowed to hire unemployed or underemployed residents to work on projects in Kenosha, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha Counties, provided those residents began their employment on projects in the city.
- The creation of an RPP Review Commission for review of RPP compliance, performance and other program matters.

The WORC has held five meetings, including two dedicated solely to input from developers, contractors, compliance monitors, trades, unions, RPP workers, and other training and community agencies.

Alderman Stamper offered sincere thanks to his fellow WORC members. “We have been blessed to have the experience and breadth of knowledge from some dedicated city staff members, and I want to thank Dan Thomas (Department of Public Works), Lori Lutzka (Department of City Development), Nikki Purvis (Office of Small Business Development), and Ronald Roberts (Department of Neighborhood Services) for their outstanding and dedicated service,” he said.

The ordinance is expected to be taken up by Council committees in June, with the possibility of going before the full Council on June 14.