



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

Oct. 24, 2016

Members of the Milwaukee Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee

James Bohl

Khalif Rainey

Nik Kovac

Milele Coggs

Russell Stamper

200 East Wells Street

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Milwaukee Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee members,

The 2015-2017 state biennial budget, under Wis. Stat. § 59.17(2)(a)3, gave the Milwaukee County executive the power to lease, sell or convey any non-park property regardless of county board policy and without the approval of the county board.

The intent of the law was to help move forward construction on the new Milwaukee Bucks arena by allowing the county executive to sell 10 acres of the Park East strip to a development group affiliated with the NBA team.

We only included non-park property in the statute because we understand the importance that parkland has on a community and want to continue to protect those parcels. Since parkland is different from all other county assets, we wrote the law in a specific way to ensure the process for selling those kinds of properties would continue to go through the county board.

But Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele and other government officials are trying to manipulate state statutes by having the area surrounding the Estabrook Dam rezoned from parks to institutional so the structure can be sold to the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District for \$1 and then be demolished.

Regardless of any option as to whether the dam should be rebuilt or razed, the issue here is the procedure being undertaken to facilitate this proposed transaction. If you vote to allow this process to proceed, every park in the county is at risk of being rezoned and sold.

Furthermore, according to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, it is unlikely that MMSD would qualify for either a Municipal Dam Safety Grant or a grant through the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program to pay for the cost of removing the dam, leaving taxpayers to fund the demolition.

In addition, there is uncertainty as to whether or not MMSD, an entity created by statutes and authorized for a specific purpose, would be overstepping its statutory authority by taking over ownership of the dam.

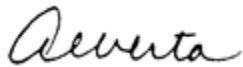
We are asking you, as members of the Milwaukee Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee, to deny the rezoning request at your next meeting because it flies in the face of the purpose of state law. The provision was never intended to allow county executives to arbitrarily sell parkland on their own, but that is what would happen if this rezoning request is approved.

The Estabrook Dam has been zoned as a park for decades, and to all of a sudden designate it as non-park property would subvert the intention of state statutes. Simply rezoning the parcel does not automatically mean this land suddenly ceases to be a park. That decision should fall before the county board, as state law and county ordinance say.

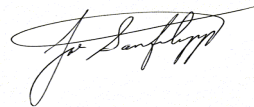
We are also asking that you not approve the rezoning at this time because we are requesting that the state attorney general review the entire process since it does not follow the intent of the legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sen. Alberta Darling



Rep. Joe Sanfelippo

CC: County Executive Chris Abele
Milwaukee Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton
Milwaukee County Board members Theodore Lipscomb, Deanna Alexander, Eddie Cullen, Marina Dimitrijevic, Jason Haas, Willie Johnson, Michael Mayo, Supreme Moore Omokunde, Marcelia Nicholson, David Sartori, James "Luigi" Schmitt, Dan Sebring, Anthony Staskunas, Sequanna Taylor, Steve Taylor, Sheldon Wasserman, John Weishan and Peggy West.