

October 17, 2006

Michael J. Murphy
Chair, Finance and Personnel Committee
Common Council
City of Milwaukee
200 E Wells Street
Milwaukee WI 53202-3570

Dear Chairman Murphy:

MPS has reviewed the proposed amendment to Sec. 36-03-4 of the Milwaukee City Charter and Code of Ordinances (the "Charter") authorizing the Board to initiate legal action against any agency or department of City government that does not provide information in the format or in the timeframe that the Board has set. It also provides for a shifting of expenses incurred by the Employees' Retirement System ("ERS") for professional and legal services incurred by ERS. Presumably this includes legal fees and expenses incurred in litigation.


MPS believes that this is an extraordinary response to a situation that the affected agencies and departments have already managed to effectively work through together, resolving problems. They will continue to do so. Unfortunately the amendment would potentially create an automatic path to litigation, sending an adversarial message rather than one of cooperation and problem solving.

As you are aware, it is often difficult to integrate existing systems with new technologies within an organization, a problem that is sharply magnified and presents greater complexity when the integration is being done across large organizations such as the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee Public Schools. Through hard work, many discussions and the continued and mutual desire to make the system work, the agencies and departments belonging to the ERS have managed to resolve a number of these issues and continue to work on resolving the rest. It is an approach that works for everyone. Such cooperation is not always the first response when the opportunity to simply "sue" is available, as can be seen in our overly litigious society.

Moreover, from a public policy perspective, given the budget pressures that we all continue to operate under, the idea of using taxpayer dollars to sue one another, including the cost of expensive outside law firms which inevitably would have to be hired, is not a good use of public dollars and resources. This is not in the best interest of our taxpayers nor the image we want to present to the broader community including business. Regardless of the outcome, scarce resources would be diverted to supporting litigation efforts and everyone loses. Our public expects us to sue on their behalf, not to sue each other at taxpayer expense.

MPS believes that precipitous action on the proposed ordinance is not warranted at this time. We believe that ERS and its participating city departments and agencies should continue to work together to resolve issues in a collegial and cooperative environment. MPS respectfully requests that this proposed amendment not be approved and instead placed on file so that the parties can continue to work together to maximize the operational efficiencies of ERS.

Sincerely,


Deborah A. Ford
Executive Director
Department of Human Resources

Copy to: William G. Andreopoulos, Superintendent
Michelle Nate, Chief Financial & Operations Officer
Lynne Sobczak, Director/Board Clerk

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Union Dues 475-8215
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Management 475-8555/475-8929
Fax 475-8562

Division of Labor Relations

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Compensation & Records

New Employee Benefits
Sign-Ups 475-8503
New Teacher
Requirements 475-8236
Salary Reclassifications/
Tuition Reimbursement 475-8210

Certificated Staffing

Manager 475-8224
Elementary 475-8222/475-8227
Middle/High 475-8020
Supportive Staff 475-8220
Licenses 475-8227
Applications 475-8220
Leaves 475-8224
Substitutes 475-8224
Fax 475-8653

Classified Staffing

Clerical 475-8218
Educational Assistants 475-8216
Other Support Staff 475-8421
Fax 475-8687