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ALDERMAN, 13TH DISTRICT

Historic Preservation Commission Role Needs Legislative Review

**Statement of Alderman Terry L. Witkowski
January 8, 2011**

It is my firmly-held opinion that the ongoing bureaucratic drama related to the proposed \$50 million downtown Marriott hotel project is “Exhibit A” as to what is out of whack with the city’s Historic Preservation Commission.

In fact, I plan on introducing legislation next week that would allow the Common Council to review the role, procedures and powers of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Why is this review necessary?

By its actions the commission is essentially delaying and preventing the city’s duly elected legislative body – the Common Council – from taking action on the important Marriott proposal. The delay has been harmful to the viability of the project, and the project’s developers certainly don’t deserve to have obstacles thrown in their way by appointed members of the commission. They do deserve thoughtful consideration from the elected members of the Council.

The commission has an advisory role and needs to make sure it fulfills that role. But, the panel should not have the power to hold up hugely important economic development projects such as this one. No other such city board or body has the authority to supersede the role of the Council, and neither should the commission.

For the record, my legislation seeks a thorough Council review of the administrative rules and procedures used by the commission. Such a review could lead to changes in how the commission conducts its business, or it could even lead to the abolishment and recreation of the body.

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(NOTE: The Historic Preservation Commission will discuss the Marriott proposal when it meets at 4 p.m. Monday, January 10 in room 301-B, City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.)