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# People's Flag Still Hitting Roadblocks

BY EVAN CASEY   OCT. 30, 2018   3:07 P.M.

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The City Flag Subcommittee will be meeting next week to decide what to do regarding the People's Flag of Milwaukee.

The battle for a new flag for the City of Milwaukee continues. Following a Common Council committee **meeting in July** that blasted the campaign and flag design known as People's Flag of Milwaukee, a Milwaukee Arts Board subcommittee was tasked with making future decisions regarding the flag.

The City Flag Subcommittee, a subcommittee within the Milwaukee Arts Board, decided to hold off a week before making a final decision regarding what to do with the People's Flag. They did decide however that there were multiple options of what their subcommittee could do before the full Milwaukee Art Board meets in two weeks.

Some of those options included adopting the People's Flag, trying to salvage the process that resulted in the People's Flag to be more inclusive or starting over again. Of those options, nearly all the members of the subcommittee agreed that they would like to see more people in the city being reached out to regarding the process of selecting a new flag.

The People's Flag of Milwaukee is the result of a 2016 design contest to create a new city flag organized by Steve Kodis that included over 1,000 entries. Robert Lenz's design was selected as the winner after receiving more than 6,000 votes online. However, the Common Council Steering and Rules Committee reamed the leaders of the campaign at their meeting in July.

"This has not been an inclusive process in my opinion," Ald. Robert Bauman said during the meeting. "I have significant portions of my district, African-Americans, that were not included and were offended by the design."

Many members of the City Flag Subcommittee agree with the Alderman. The board said they would have liked to see people with disabilities, the elderly and people from a variety of backgrounds and racial makeups involved in the campaign. The *Shepherd Express* reported that the People's Flag campaign, led by Steve Kodis, did outreach on social media

and across the city by visiting schools and even Boys and Girls Clubs to promote the design. Kodis showed a slideshow featuring photos of the flag on multiple items such as T-shirts, bikes and hats at the July meeting.

“I was impressed by a lot of what they accomplished,” said David Flores, a member of the Arts Board. “However, I would say that the deficiencies were strong enough in my opinion, that I wouldn’t adopt the People’s Flag process for the City of Milwaukee.”

Following the July Steering and Rules Committee meeting, the subcommittee asked the Arts Board to submit a report to the Common Council that showed an evaluation as to how to proceed. The subcommittee also wanted multiple options for a new design, if that was something the Arts Board decided was appropriate.

A Legislative Reference Bureau study found that adopting a new flag could cost the city anywhere from approximately \$3,000, to \$252,000—the latter amount representing a more aggressive replacement approach. The current flag, which was adopted in 1954, has been called the worst city flag in America.

The City Flag Subcommittee will meet to discuss next steps Monday, Nov. 5 at 4 p.m. at City Hall. However, it is important to note that the subcommittee has not been tasked with deciding the ultimate design of the flag—that’s up to the Common Council.

“We are not here to pick out a new flag or design a new flag,” said Bill DeLind, chairman of the subcommittee. “Our job is specific to say whether the process that went through was good enough or not. I think it was, because nothing is going to be perfect, but they did a darn good job.”

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Evan Casey is a freelance journalist who has been writing for the Shepherd Express since early 2018. He covers city hall and local issues across Milwaukee and the region.

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