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Brett Blomme remarks before the Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee of the Milwaukee Common Council, Monday, February 4, 2019

Thank you, Chairman Rainey and distinguished members of this committee. I am Brett Blomme, and I have the privilege of being before you today having been appointed to serve on the City of Milwaukee Board of Zoning Appeals, replacing Catherine Doyle. I want to thank Mayor Barrett for making this appointment, and also express my appreciation to the members of this distinguished committee for considering my candidacy here today.

I wish to start this morning by providing you a brief background of my educational and professional qualifications.

I graduated from Marquette University with a Bachelor of Art's degree, majoring in Political Science and minoring in Philosophy. Immediately upon graduation, I served on the campaign staff of Congresswoman Gwen Moore's first campaign for Congress. I also became actively engaging in grassroots fundraising and organizing for the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center.

I am a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Law and a licensed attorney in the State of Wisconsin. Since graduating law school, I have dedicated my career as a lawyer and community leader to serving underprivileged individuals. This I first accomplished as an attorney with the Wisconsin State Public Defender's office, and most recently as the President and CEO of Cream City Foundation, Wisconsin's premiere community foundation working to advance the health, equity and prosperity of LGBTQ+ people.

Public service and community involvement have been important to me for as long as I can remember, and this provides the basis for my desire to serve the citizens of Milwaukee in this important position.

My background includes service on several boards and committees, including the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, the Wisconsin State Public Defender's office Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, and the City of Monona's Library Board of Directors.

Most relevant to this appointment, however is previously service I provided on the City of Monona Zoning Board of Appeals, an equivalent appeals board to Milwaukee's Board of Zoning Appeals. Like the body for which I am being appointed today, this Board hears and rules on citizen requests for Use and Variance Appeals. I served as a citizen member on that body for three years' time. Also, highly relevant to my appointment is experience I've gathered as a practicing attorney. As both a Public Defender and an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Madison, I have extensive involvement with court procedure and municipal law. This experience will position me well to lead BOZA, a quasi-judicial body.

I have a strong connection to and passion for Milwaukee. My vision as President of Cream City Foundation is to make Milwaukee the best place in America for LGBTQ+ people to live work and play. Part of advancing that mission is to be active in the community. I am a member of

Downtown Milwaukee Rotary Club, Miltown LGBT Families, a support group for LGBT people raising children, and SSBL-Milwaukee, one of the oldest gay softball organizations in the country.

My goals and vision for chairing BOZA at this time are best described in the context of my values. First, I value transparency. I will work diligently to make certain BOZA continues to be open and accessible to the public. I will ensure that the website and other materials that lay out the criteria and process for appeals are accessible and clear to both applicants and interested members of the public. I will also work with staff to ensure that they have the tools they need to provide high quality service to the citizens of Milwaukee.

Next, I value fairness. I know from experience that testifying in any type of court or public proceeding can be intimidating for those who do not do it on a regular basis. I will conduct BOZA hearings in a way that will allow every citizen's voice to be heard. Even if the Board rules against a person's position, I want them to feel like they had ample opportunity to present their case.

Finally, I value public service. The city staff representing various city departments that interface with BOZA bring experience and insight to their careers. I will ensure that BOZA continues to value the input from these public servants because at the end of the day, we are all focused on helping the people of Milwaukee.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to address the committee today. I humbly ask for your support of my appointment before you, and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.