



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

June 23, 2021

The Honorable, Members of the Common Council of
The City of Milwaukee
City Hall Room 205

Honorable Council Members:

I am vetoing Common Council File Number 210232. This file repeals section 304-21 of the City Code, removing the requirement that agreements, contracts, property transfers or property purchases are reviewed and approved by the City Attorney. The replacement ordinance makes such a review optional, only at the request of the mayor or common council.

The file, if it were enacted, exposes the City to significant liabilities and risks. Removing a required third party review for contracts approved by the council or any other city official is dangerous. The City executes hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts and property transfers each year. Removing a mandatory attorney review could needlessly create enormous potential liabilities for the City.

The existing ordinance is good public policy for several reasons. The review by an independently elected City Attorney adds a layer of protection for taxpayers when entering contracts for services, supplies, or major projects. A mandatory third party review by the City Attorney puts the City in a stronger position to defend against challenges and controversies.

The mandatory review also increases transparency and supports good government. Milwaukee is unique in having an elected City Attorney. The City Attorney and the Attorney's staff are better able to neutrally advise the Mayor and Common Council on legal risks in contracts, land sales, and development agreements. Requiring City Attorney approval of these actions under the existing ordinance provides more accountability and protection for voters and taxpayers.

I am sensitive to the current conflict between the City Attorney and Common Council. Repealing this ordinance attempts to resolve that conflict by removing a critical check and balance in City government for all future Mayors, Councils, and City Attorneys. A bypass of legal review increases the possibility nefarious interests will affect contracts and land sales.

The mandatory review has served our residents and taxpayers well for over 50 years, and adds accountability and transparency into City government. Removing it will create a host of risks and costs for the City in the future. For that reason, I respectfully request that you sustain my veto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a distinct "t" at the end.

Tom Barrett
Mayor