



Legislation Text

File #: 141335, Version: 1

141335
SUBSTITUTE 1

ALD. WITKOWSKI

Substitute resolution urging the State of Wisconsin to study the benefits of merging the governance of the Wisconsin Center and the BMO Harris Bradley Center and, if such a merger is found to be beneficial, to pass the state legislation necessary to combine these entities under a single governing body.

This resolution urges the State of Wisconsin to study the benefits of merging the State-created governing bodies of the Wisconsin Center and the BMO Harris Bradley Center. If the State's analysis of this potential merger of governance indicates that the merger would be beneficial, the resolution also urges the State Legislature to pass the legislation necessary to combine these entities under a single governing body.

Whereas, The Wisconsin Center District is a government body created in 1994 by the Wisconsin Statutes (s. 229.42) to fund, build and operate the Midwest Express Center (now Wisconsin Center) in Downtown Milwaukee, and to continue operating the existing venues now called the UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena and Milwaukee Theatre; and

Whereas, The mission of the Wisconsin Center District is to market and successfully operate Milwaukee's premier convention facility and two of its major entertainment and sporting-event venues, thereby creating jobs and income for the Greater Milwaukee community; and

Whereas, A 2012 economic impact analysis of the Wisconsin Center District prepared by HVS Convention, Sports and Entertainment Facilities Consulting, found that, over the preceding 5-year period, the District generated over \$350 million in annual gross spending (of which over \$130 million was new to the Milwaukee economy) and supported over 4,000 full-time-equivalent jobs annually, including over 1,430 jobs associated with the net additional spending attributable to the District; and

Whereas, The Bradley Center Sports and Entertainment Corporation, a nonprofit corporation created by ch. 232 of the Wisconsin Statutes, owns and operates the BMO Harris Bradley Center, a 17,800-20,000-seat arena that opened in Downtown Milwaukee in 1988; and

Whereas, The BMO Harris Bradley Center is home to the Milwaukee Bucks and Milwaukee Admirals professional basketball and hockey teams and the Marquette University men's basketball team, also hosts a number of major concerts and special events each year, and, as such, brings an estimated 1.2 million visitors to Milwaukee annually; and

Whereas, While the Wisconsin Center District and the Bradley Center Sports and Entertainment Corporation are two distinct entities created by State legislation at different times to own and operate different facilities, these organizations have a similar purpose, namely to operate sports and entertainment venues in Downtown Milwaukee; and

Whereas, The Wisconsin Center District and the Bradley Center Sports and Entertainment Corporation operate overlapping and competing entities for sports and entertainment in Downtown Milwaukee; and

Whereas, The owners of the Milwaukee Bucks and other business and community leaders are now actively discussing building a new arena, perhaps as part of a larger sports and entertainment complex, to replace the BMO Harris Bradley Center; and

Whereas, One of the sites that has been proposed for this new facility includes two of the buildings owned and operated by the Wisconsin Center District, namely, the Milwaukee Theatre and the UW-Milwaukee Panther Arena; and

Whereas, At the same time that potential locations for a replacement for the BMO Harris Bradley Center are being discussed - including locations within the Wisconsin Center District - the Wisconsin Center District is itself considering a possible facility expansion; and

Whereas, In 2013, the Wisconsin Center District and VISIT Milwaukee hired HVS Convention, Sports and Entertainment Facilities Consulting to conduct a market and feasibility analysis for a potential expansion of the Wisconsin Center; and

Whereas, The consultant study, released in May, 2014, recommends increasing the convention center's exhibit space to 250,000 square feet and its meeting space to 75,000 square feet by building out the block bounded by 4th, 6th and Wells Streets and Kilbourn Avenue; and

Whereas, The consultants believe this facility expansion would make Milwaukee more competitive with its peer convention cities and help it attract new national, regional and state conventions to the city; and

Whereas, The study projects the following annual economic impacts accruing to the city of Milwaukee from the proposed Wisconsin Center expansion: net direct spending of \$42 million, indirect spending of \$10.6 million and induced spending of \$10.9 million, for a total of \$63.5 million, along with 644 additional permanent jobs; and

Whereas, The consultants also noted that if, it were part of a larger mixed-use sports and entertainment complex that included a replacement for the BMO Harris Bradley Center, the Wisconsin Center expansion could play a vital role in the redevelopment of Downtown Milwaukee; and

Whereas, The Common Council finds that since both the Wisconsin Center District and the Bradley Center Sports and Entertainment Corporation are discussing expanded or new facilities on the west side of Milwaukee's Downtown, and the outcomes of these discussions could profoundly affect Downtown land use patterns and the economic health of the city as a whole, it is prudent to consider a possible merger of these governing bodies; and

Whereas, The boards of these two governing entities have not met jointly and cooperatively to plan for future land use in an important part of Downtown Milwaukee, even though both plan use for the same sites; and

Whereas, The Common Council further finds that there is a possibility that significant operational efficiencies could be realized through the merger of the Wisconsin Center District and the Bradley Center Sports and Entertainment Corporation, and that the new, amalgamated entity may be more effective in marketing and hosting major sports, entertainment and convention events in Milwaukee; and

Whereas, The Wisconsin Center District has hired a consultant to study the possibility of merging, consolidating or coordinating the governance and functions of the Wisconsin Center District and VISIT Milwaukee; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, By the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee, that the City of Milwaukee urges the State of Wisconsin to study the benefits of merging governance of the Wisconsin Center and the BMO Harris Bradley Center and its replacement; and, be it

Further Resolved, That, if the State's analysis of this potential merger of governance indicates that the merger would be beneficial, the State Legislature is urged to pass the legislation necessary to combine these entities under a single governing body.

LRB156092-2
Jeff Osterman
12/01/2014