

November 23, 2020

Mayor Tom Barrett
City Hall
200 E Wells St # 201
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Barrett,

You have previously committed to appointing additional commissioners to bring the complement of the Fire and Police Commission (FPC) to nine. We think the time to do that is now.

The FPC's critically important duties include oversight of the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) to ensure adherence to the rule of law and provide unbiased professional public safety service in every neighborhood. Recently, however, the FPC has been going through a period of disarray at both the commission and staff levels. An FPC composed of the nine members allowed by law would help remedy current problems and provide the short- and long-term benefits of further diversifying the skill set on the commission, enhancing community representation, and better enabling commissioners to tackle the large and important workload they have cut out for them. In addition, all commissioners should serve current, unexpired terms.

Over the last several years, critical incidents, including deaths in custody, aggressive responses to largely peaceful demonstrations, and policing strategies such as racial profiling and unconstitutional stops, have contributed to tension between some members of the community and the MPD. In considering potential nominees to the FPC, we think it is important to consider the FPC as a whole and how a nominee would improve the work of the commission. It is vital that the commission uses its oversight function to enhance police-community relations, that it be independent from political pressure, and that commissioners are able to ask the MPD and Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) chiefs tough questions until they get satisfactory answers.

It is also key that the FPC appointment and confirmation processes be transparent to the community and that nominees be thoroughly vetted for potential conflicts of interest.

Specifically, we would like to encourage nominees who:

1. Have first-hand knowledge about the issues young people are facing.
2. Represent targeted populations that have high degrees of police contact.
3. Have the ability to analyze data and think critically.
4. Have the ability to ask difficult questions of authority figures.
5. Have the abilities to advocate for the community regarding police issues in the City of Milwaukee and to work with diverse constituencies (i.e., the MPD, the MFD, elected officials, and the community) in an oversight role.
6. Have the ability to make policy and procedural recommendations.
7. Have the ability to develop and use outreach strategies to obtain and incorporate input into consideration of MPD policies and procedures and their impacts on the community.

8. Are committed to attending substantially all FPC meetings, to actively participate in those meetings and other non-meeting work of the commission, and to work collaboratively with fellow commissioners.

At this moment, it is critical that the City of Milwaukee and the MPD rebuild trust with the public. Meaningful oversight will go a long way towards this goal. Please add three new commissioners and give the FPC the tools it needs to help ensure this happens.

Signed:

League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County
ACLU of Wisconsin
Anita Johnson
Black Leaders Organizing Communities (BLOC)
Black Lives Matter to Wisconsin Unitarian Universalists
Camille Mays
Great Lakes Urban Empowerment Center
Jump at the Sun Consultants, LLC
Lorraine Lathen
Martin Luther King Justice Coalition
Milwaukee County Human Rights Commission
Milwaukee Inner-city Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)
The Milwaukee Turners
NAACP Milwaukee Branch
National Lawyers' Guild - Milwaukee Chapter
Progressive Baptist Church
Walter Lanier
Wisconsin Justice Initiative
Youth Justice Milwaukee