



Ashanti Hamilton
President, Milwaukee Common Council
200 E Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

January 14, 2020

Dear President Hamilton:

Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to update you and members of the Council last week Thursday in the Steering & Rules Committee.

To recap, we discussed several key issues facing my office such as:

- Presentation on ACLU settlement agreement
- Audit and Department Assessment by the Inspector General and a third-party Human Resources Consultant
- Staffing challenges and my desire to fill key positions as soon as possible
- The special meeting/vote process regarding Police Chief Morales
- Discussing the access to the Fire and Police Commission offices I have previously explained (in Open & Closed Sessions) with this very Committee
- An implication that not allowing FPC Commissioners access to our offices -- which are directly connected to Department of Employee Relations -- hinder their oversight abilities. Also, Commissioners not having official city email addresses or telephone numbers to be contacted by residents

As the Executive Director of the Fire and Police Commission and leader of a vital city department, I want to be very clear: We are working extremely hard to make much-needed changes within this department while also keeping the Council apprised of the challenges we face. However, baseless and relentless attacks, rumors, and speculation regarding me and my staff, is not something I will allow moving forward.

What happened last Thursday was more than unprofessional -- it was outright grotesque and misogynistic. I always welcome open dialogue to discuss or debate policy issues with those who may not always agree, but what happened during that committee was classic blame-shifting and name-calling with veiled threats from elected officials. Rather than rationally asking questions and even the right to question the answers given, two women who lead key departments for the City were accosted. This seems to be the nature as of late for the Steering and Rules Committee -- mainly by select alders.

This ends now.

As civil servants, we all work hard to gain and regain public trust while executing our daily mandates. How can we work in good faith with one another if the only words spoken are attacks?

I call upon you and leaders of this body to hold each other accountable and censure when necessary.

As you know, I am grossly understaffed and have limited resources to continuously discuss --while important -- redundant issues. With over 4 months on the job, we are still assessing the complexities of this office and where changes must occur. I understand and fully support the Council's role in meaningful oversight, however, by doing so with such short notice or reasonable background information to prepare for these meetings, it leaves me little time to strategize or implement the changes needed.

Mr. President, I request your assistance in this regard.

As I stated at several Steering & Rules Committee meetings (Open & Closed Sessions), and every other committee where I have testified: I continuously make myself available for 1-on-1 meetings, calls, and whenever possible, to join any district meetings Alders are hosting. **In addition to making myself available, my office will be launching a transparency and accountability campaign that is tasked with increasing communication with residents and highlight progress and significant positive outcomes to the Council and media.** This includes a monthly newsletter, press briefings, and dedicated community engagement throughout the city.

Griselda Aldrete, Executive Director

Steven M. DeVougas, Chair
Nelson Soler, Vice-Chair

Commissioners
Ann Wilson
Fred Crouther
Angela McKenzie
Everett Cocroft
Ray Robakowski

Furthermore, I believe the two items below warranted a written follow-up:

In response to Commissioners not having official city email addresses or telephone numbers to be contacted by residents:

I am a strong proponent of transparency and the ability for residents to contact their elected or appointed representatives. I recommend the creation of official city email addresses for them with haste, and allocate cell phones or secure, password-protected voicemails for each Commissioner so residents can speak to them directly.

This would most definitely ease the burden of my office needing to forward media and community requests to them, while also ensuring the community has a direct line of communication with Commissioners.

As mentioned earlier, I do not have the staff or budget to accommodate this currently, but I am happy to sit down and explore options. **This is about transparency and trust. I believe residents have this right and it should be honored.**

I also would like to be clear once again; the Commissioners are not prohibited from talking or working with my staff by any means. This is the Commission's job as an oversight body. I have asked staff to please inform me of open dialogue and requests from Commissioners so that I may ensure we are delivering what the Commissioners need and that we meet deadlines, and vice versa.

Lastly, as I mentioned last week, **the reason Commissioners cannot speak to each other as they once did, is because the Chairman has appointed himself on each Committee, causing a negative quorum.** I do not have any input on this matter, however, if the Council would like to see Commissioners being able to collaborate more, I would suggest exploring options with Chairman DeVougas.

In response to the question regarding the special meeting/vote process regarding Police Chief Morales. Here is the order of events:

1. Commissioner Soler made the motion to reappoint Chief Morales to a 4-year term, with Commissioner McKenzie seconding the motion.
2. Chairman DeVougas asked the body if there was any further discussion.
3. Commissioner Cocroft asked for further discussion and asked that the confirmation be contingent on 2 community meetings before the vote.
4. Deputy City Attorney Horwitz instructed the Commission that there was a motion that was seconded on the floor and it would have to be withdrawn first by Commissioner Soler if any amendments were to be made to the motion.
5. Commissioner Soler clarified and made the motion to Divide - which compels the body to take a vote on the pending motion.
6. Commissioner Crouther asked the Deputy City Attorney Horwitz regarding making a substitute motion, however, Commissioner Soler would have to accept the amendment.
7. Commissioner Cocroft requested a substitute amendment, delaying the confirmation until Chief Morales gives 2 community meetings on the North and South sides of Milwaukee.
8. Commissioner Soler rejected the amendment and the motion on the floor stood and the Chief was voted in by the FPC Commissioners **4 Yes, 1 Abstention, 2 Nay.**

There was no motion to hold as insinuated at the Steering and Rules Committee by Alderman Baumann.

[Video](#) timestamp starting at 2:08:00

Mr. President, in closing I would ask that you please express my staffing limitations and time constraints with your fellow Council members and understand that I may need to begin sending a designee in my place to any respective Committee(s) seeking updates from the Fire and Police Commission Office. My goal is to work collaboratively and respectfully with the Council and community however we can, while also performing our duties and rebuilding trust in the FPC.

Together, I know we can make a difference.

Regards,

Griselda Aldrete
Executive Director
Milwaukee Fire & Police Commission

**cc: Steering & Rules Committee
City of Milwaukee Common Council**