

Monday, March 26, 2007

Mayor Tom Barrett

Dear Mayor Barrett,

Thank you for meeting with me last week. Per the request of the members of the board of the Private Industry Council (PIC), I sought to find a way to allow the PIC to continue with an even greater focus on the City of Milwaukee. Per the representative from the federal Department of Labor that joined us at the meeting, however, it is clear that it is the legal right of the Mayor of a city over 500,000 in population to request the designation of the Workforce Investment Board (WIB). And per your comments at the meeting, it is clear that you will continue with your request to have the city named as the WIB in Milwaukee County.

Before talking about transitions, however, I want to reiterate some of my concerns about the product and the process.

As mentioned, the fundamental question I have is simple: What will the City of Milwaukee do with workforce development that will be different than what the PIC is doing now (or could be doing in the future)? Just saying that other mayors have control of the WIB in their area and that you want to be in control of workforce development issues in Milwaukee isn't enough. You need to articulate exactly what that means.

In particular, I believe that you need to establish the framework of your workforce development agency very soon. Specifically, I think you need to set up city department long before July 1, 2007 and put in place staff to insure a smooth transition. Doing so will also give current staff at the PIC some confidence that key programs will continue under the new structure.

I also believe that you need to start identifying changes to the programs run by PIC well before July 1, 2007. To avoid a major gap in workforce development programming, you need to put in place a way to hit the ground running in areas you want to change for the future. Unlike previous statements made about waiting six months to see how things work at the PIC, I think you need to start now. If not, you will lose valuable staff and programs.

Per the community, you will also need to articulate what will be different (and hopefully better) under the new system. For individuals and employers involved with the PIC, they will need to know what the future holds under a new system.

As mentioned on several occasions, Milwaukee County provided a guarantee so the PIC could obtain the building at 27th and North. Currently, the PIC has \$600,000 left to repay. We need to know who will cover that amount in the future.

Finally, the overall process used to get to this request was fundamentally flawed. At no point did the supporters of a move to a city department speak directly to the staff or board of the PIC to outline their plan. In fact, one of the board members told me that this question was put to the city last year and the answer was no to wanting to take over the PIC. The PIC board is a

diverse representation of the community and they feel left out of this entire process. Why would such a push occur without working the current board?

While I have very serious concerns about a move from the PIC to the City of Milwaukee, I do realize that the official from the U.S. Department of Labor made it clear that you have the right to take this action and that the Governor and the council must approve the request. With that in mind, I hope that you will find the time to reach out to the members of the PIC board and staff prior to July 1, 2007.

Sincerely,

Scott Walker
Milwaukee County Executive

Cc: PIC Board Members
Governor Jim Doyle
Workforce Investment Council