

Thursday, March 22, 2007

XXx

After our last meeting, I took some time to meet with staff from the Private Industry Council (PIC) and to talk with members of the PIC Board. In addition to the questions raised in the email, I have one simple question that has not been answered: ***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)?***

I have heard about accountability to an elected official as being one of the key differences (since the PIC is not a government department or division of the county). Still, I recall that one of the reasons stated for looking into such a change was the UWM report last year that raised serious questions about the multitude of different and confusing economic development programs available in the city and area. *Don't many of these programs originate from the Department of City Development in the City of Milwaukee?*

If that is the case, how does moving the infrastructure of workforce development from the PIC to the City of Milwaukee improve that issue?

So far, I have yet to hear or read anything concrete about what will be different (and better) once the City of Milwaukee runs workforce development. In fact, at one of our previous meetings it was stated that the city would keep things going with the staff and programs from the PIC for some six months after the change. *If there were a dramatic need to change things, why would the city wait six months before starting to make dramatic changes?*

In addition, 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. *Who will cover that amount if the PIC is closed?*

If the decision by the state to designate the City of Milwaukee is made final on Tuesday, the PIC board will have to notify staff – and the community – of the shut down by April 1 (to comply with the 90 day notification law). *How will we prevent an exodus of staff and others from the workforce development programs before the city takes over?*

Finally, the process of this discussion is fundamentally flawed. At no point have the supporters of a move to a city department spoke 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?*

Questions from previous meeting:

- *What are the pros and cons of a city wide structure, a county wide structure operated by the city, a regional structure and/or functions, and an agency embedded into the county structure?*
- *Income maintenance and reactions on where that function should remain or if could be regionalized or moved to the state. What other functions can be regionalized?*

- *How will the current liabilities, assets and staff of the PIC would be dealt with in a transition plan?*
- *What will happen to the 18 communities not in the city service area?*
- *Reaction from the County Board?*

Possible Compromise for Workforce Development

Currently, there are XX members on the Private Industry Council (PIC) board. All XX appointments are made by Milwaukee County. The federal Department of Labor requires a number of the appointments to cover specific categories.

To add additional emphasis to the City of Milwaukee, half of the appointments in the future could be made by the Mayor of Milwaukee with the other half made by the Milwaukee County Executive. This would allow the current structure of the PIC to remain in place but would open the door to an entirely different relationship with the City of Milwaukee.

Pros

- PIC structure and programs could remain in place (with obvious focus on renewal and changes in key areas)
- Consensus between city and county – as well as others in the community
- Resolves disputes as to coverage of municipalities outside of Milwaukee – within Milwaukee County
- No gap in workforce development services during a potential transition

Possible Cons

- Appointments of board members made by Mayor and County Executive raises questions about accountability (conversely, the group appointed by the Mayor and County Executive to act on mental health housing issues is working well)