

March 24, 2005

Milwaukee County was the only county in our state to lose population in the 2000 census. In light of this fact, our county government, together with each of the municipalities, is working diligently to retain and attract residents and businesses to Milwaukee County. It is imperative that we maintain a safe community for individuals and families that live here, and not become a haven for sexually violent offenders.

On March 8, the chair of the Sexually Violent Persons Transitional Facility Siting Advisory Committee made public a list of six properties under consideration by the committee to be forwarded to the state Department of Health and Family Services and the state Department of Corrections.

Two of the sites are county-owned land that is not currently for sale. The properties are located at 9201 S. 68th Street in Franklin and 10401 W. County Line Road in Milwaukee. Milwaukee County views both of these properties and the surrounding areas as important sites for future recreation, economic and community development. Construction of a residential facility for sexually violent persons at either location would adversely impact the potential for any future development of parks, recreational facilities or any other use that would benefit our county.

While the committee may view these properties with favor for being in somewhat isolated locations, that view is short sighted as it fails to consider the potential for future development in those areas. I suggested that the committee should consult with real estate professionals to gain a better understanding of the vast potential for future recreational, economic or community development that this project would undoubtedly disrupt in both of these areas.

In addition, both of these properties would have to go through a process requiring the approval of the County Executive and a majority vote of the County Board of Supervisors. I am strongly oppose the sale of either county-owned parcel for the transitional facility, and notified the advisory committee of my stance.

Private owners of four of the properties opted to remove their properties from consideration and the panel immediately removed these locations. Yet the panel ignored the county's objections and still may recommend the county-owned sites.

The committee developed a list of criteria to determine appropriate sites. Interestingly, one of the criteria was the following: *"No location can be considered without the agreement of the land owner that the address under consideration will be released to the community prior to the public hearing, except for properties owned by a governmental entity."*

Some members of this committee seem to have a political motive: shift the responsibility to Milwaukee County - and specifically to the County Executive. The responsibility for dealing with these offenders is clearly with the state - primarily the state Department of Health and

Family Services and, ultimately, with the Governor. Legally, this issue has nothing to do with Milwaukee County or other municipalities within the county. Site designation and placement is the responsibility of state government.

The process this panel followed shows that the current law needs to be updated. There is no good place to house these offenders. Instead, the law that was enacted in 1995 should be changed to keep these offenders out of our communities.

Remember, these individuals are defined as being sexually violent persons. This is not a prison term, this is a clinically diagnosis. The state law actually says that they are "likely" to commit another violent sex act. Allowing these individuals back into the community makes no sense and we need to update the state law to insure our protection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Walker', written over a thin horizontal line.

Scott Walker
Milwaukee County Executive