



# *Milwaukee County*

Supervisor Deanna Alexander, 18<sup>th</sup> District

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## **SUPERVISOR THANKS RESIDENTS FOR ATTENDING TOWN HALL** *Meeting nearly derailed by non-resident activists*

**Milwaukee** – Milwaukee County Supervisor Deanna Alexander was pleased at the turnout of about 100 people at a town hall meeting on March 19<sup>th</sup> at Evangel Assembly of God church on N. 99<sup>th</sup> and W. Good Hope Rd. She is grateful that about 15 of those attendees raised their hands to signify that they were residents of her district and thanks them for their patience and respect at the meeting.

“This town hall meeting was unlike any of the others I’ve held,” said Alexander. “I didn’t believe people when they cautioned me that activists might attempt to overtake the meeting, but that is exactly what happened. There were fewer district residents at *this* meeting, which was advertised with a 3,100 piece mailing, than at the last town hall meeting I brought to the community on this topic of government reform back in January.”

The March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting was also announced in County Board press releases, written about weeks ago in the Journal Sentinel, advertised on Twitter and Facebook social media, and posted on the County’s website. Alexander even went door-to-door in the days before the event verbally inviting residents to attend.

“I am certainly open to any other suggestions on reaching the public, but I can’t force their interest. Voters must *choose* to care about their government, and that includes contacting elected officials to get connected,” she said. More district residents will get another nudge, however, as Alexander plans to soon mail out a district-wide newsletter.

In order to educate the public and offer direct answers to constituents’ questions at the meeting, Alexander invited Rep. Joe Sanfelippo, the author of a state bill that would change Milwaukee County governance, to speak to the group. To ensure balance and diverse viewpoints, Alexander also invited Jennifer Epps-Addison, from Citizen Action, to speak to the group about reasons to oppose Assembly Bill 85. Both guests were given an opportunity to speak, but only Rep. Sanfelippo was rudely interrupted and verbally attacked.

Alexander intervened on behalf of the guests and constituents speaking their peace several times. “That is my duty as a host, facilitator, and a leader in this community,” she said. “I gave everyone a choice that we could all shout at once for a few minutes and then call it a night; or we could continue talking, one at a time, without yelling and cursing. It’s perfectly okay to be upset or forceful, but it is not acceptable to be belligerent and disrespectful.”

“A few constituents have contacted me to apologize for leaving the town hall early—they were so frustrated with non-residents being disrespectful, despite my best efforts to maintain the peace, that they choose to contact me directly to receive answers to their questions,” said Alexander.

About an hour into the meeting, after refusing to fully hear out the speakers and making a scene, a large group of mostly non-residents left the meeting all at once. After the presentations, Alexander gave every single person in the room an opportunity to speak and be heard, starting with district residents.

“I didn’t use a timer, like some do at these type of meetings. I responded to questions directly and openly, and gently steered us to stay on topic in asking and answering questions. I even stayed, talking with voters out in the parking lot after the meeting ended, until every single person wanting my time was satisfied,” she continued.

On the legislation itself, Alexander gave an upbeat mixed review. “While I don’t agree with everything in AB 85, I also don’t want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. There are some valuable ideas in that piece of legislation,” said Alexander, who plans to suggest ideas for amendment to state legislators.

One person asked Alexander why she bothers with meetings like this. The County Supervisor stressed the importance of appreciating diverse civil dialogue and how it can help a community grow stronger.

“I try to be politically independent and my job is to listen to those I represent, both those who support me and criticize me, and to use the information I receive to craft better policies for the people of this county. I am grateful to my constituents, both conservative and liberal, wealthy and poor, who came to the meeting, heard the presentations and cared enough to share their views and concerns with me,” she said.

Those wishing to receive communication from Supervisor Alexander’s office should call (414) 278-4234 or email [Deanna.Alexander@milwcnty.com](mailto:Deanna.Alexander@milwcnty.com) to be added to the email or mailing lists.

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