

Summer, 2006

16th District
Milwaukee County Supervisor

John F.
WEISHAN Jr.



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Inside

Advisory Referendum for
Property Tax Relief, Parks & Transit

Park Security

McCarty Park Pool Changing Rooms
Renovation to be Delayed

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Milwaukee
County **Report**

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Advisory Referendum for Property Tax Relief, Parks & Transit

The attempt to seek public opinion on a proposal to save our parks and transit system along with providing major property tax relief was defeated at the June 22 County Board meeting. I along with other supervisors wanted to put before the people of Milwaukee County an advisory referendum question that would have asked,

“ Shall the state of Wisconsin grant Milwaukee County the authority to levy an additional one percent (1.0%) county use and sales tax, the revenues of which will be used to reduce all property tax revenues currently used to fund county transit, parks, recreation and culture programs and services, guaranteeing a \$50 million reduction in the property tax levy?”

YES ____ NO ____

This proposal would have lowered the county property tax on an average home of \$150,000 by \$160.00; while, providing new revenue for our deteriorating park system, allow for the roll back of transit fare increases and restore route cuts to our transit system. None of the revenue would be used for general government services or pensions.

Raising the sales tax 1% is not just a tax increase. In exchange for shifting to a larger sales tax, the Milwaukee County homeowner would receive major property tax relief along with an improved park system and a lower costing transit system. The fact that 30 to 40% of all sales taxes are paid by out of county people only decreases the dependence on the local property tax.

If we truly want property tax relief while continuing the legacy of a world class park system and nationally recognized transit system we have to look at the entire tax structure and the combination of taxes that pay for the services we enjoy. We should be open to alternatives and seek solutions.

The referendum proposal was intended to promote public discussion of how do we want to support Milwaukee County amenities and services like the parks and transit, through the property tax or a sales tax? Unfortunately, we have some in County Government that do not believe in the wisdom of the people and continue to adhere to failed political slogans.

After taking a look at the way some individuals in the media and County Executive Scott Walker continued to misrepresent the referendum question and its property tax relief component, one can't help but wonder if they have other motivating factors such as campaign contributors interested in large-scale sales of parkland for real estate development or those with a vested interest in privatization of county services? There are real solutions to Milwaukee County's funding problems it only takes the will and determination to find the ones that benefit the public more than the campaign contributors. There is no more time left to waste, we must present solutions now or county treasures will fall into ruin.



Park Security

Parks security is a concern to all users of the park system and this year we have had a few incidences that have highlighted this issue.

Over the last year I have looked into the cost of creating what Park's Director Sue Black has called a park ranger program in an effort to reassure the public that their parks are safe and invite them back to enjoy the wonderful recreational opportunities that exist in our community. The preliminary cost projections for a force of 30 park rangers is estimated at \$2.5 to \$3 million per year. This is no small number, but I think it is justified by the outcomes of the last 12 months and merits further research.

In the short-term it is the Sheriff's responsibility to patrol the parks and other county owned property. I was very disappointed at Sheriff Clark's refusal to appear before the Judiciary Committee and the Parks Committee in June of this year to explain the rash of violence that has occurred throughout our parks, but most noticeably on Memorial Day at South Shore Park and the following weeks at Caesar Park. Over the past few years the Sheriff has abandoned the park system in favor of other more high profile PR projects. This is fine if your intensions are to bolster your own image, but lets not forget that this type of pandering comes at the expense of the general public's safety.

2003 Park Patrol Budget \$240,816

2004 Park Patrol Budget \$172,152

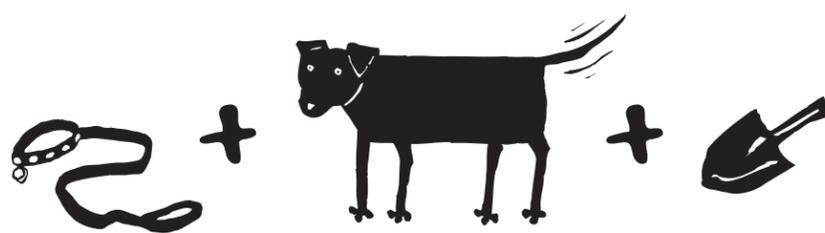
2005 Park Patrol Budget \$172,140

2006 Park Patrol Budget \$208,836

The solution for safety in our parks is not a complicated one. First, we must focus on the mission of patrolling our parks and apply proven techniques to get the job done. Second, the appropriate amount of funds must be requested in the budget process to reduce the possibility of shortfall during the year, if a shortfall does occur, upon proper notification the County Executive and the County Board have the responsibility to take action at that time.

Using Milwaukee County's financial situation as a scapegoat or excuse to not fund security precautions within our parks is unacceptable. Each year at the formal county budget hearings, all department heads and offices are asked "can you perform all your required duties under this budget with the resources allotted"? The answer from the Sheriff has always been yes.

The current park security plan promoted by the Sheriff completely ignores the needs of neighborhood parks and once again is more about show than substance. Ask yourself when was the last time you saw a Sheriff's Patrol in Euclid, Alcott, McCarty, Jackson, Manitoba, Zablocki Parks or the Parkway? We can and must do better.



**Leash and pick up after your dog;
it's the law!**

Jackson Park **FREE** Concert Schedule

Sponsored by
North Shore Bank
3500 W. Forest Home Ave.
Picnic Area 2

Tuesday, Aug. 1

5:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

UWM Guitar Students, jazz

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

King Comets

Tuesday, Aug. 8

5:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

UWM Guitar Students, fingerstyle

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Upside Groove Coalition

Tuesday, Aug. 15

5:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

UWM Guitar Students, fingerstyle

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

The Mahp

Tuesday, Aug. 22

5:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

UWM Guitar Students, classical

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

The Acoustix

Tuesday, Aug. 29

5:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

UWM Guitar Students, classical

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Fire Sign



Town Hall Meetings

McCarty
Park

September 5
at 6:00 p.m.

Jackson
Park Boathouse
September 6
at 6:00 p.m.

McCarty Park Pool Changing Rooms Renovation to be Delayed

Due to the multi-million dollar cost over runs of the demolition of the courthouse annex, the renovation of the changing rooms will be delayed until 2008.

I have expressed my displeasure with the failures of the Walker administration to control the cost of the annex project. The original estimate presented by County Executive Walker was \$3.5 million, now the project has erupted into a \$11 million project. As a result, other worthwhile projects will have to be delayed to ensure that funds are available to complete the demolition.

Public meetings will still be held on the proposed changes to the changing room areas, but not until spring of 2007.