

From: [Minette Knotts](#)
To: [Kelsey Evans](#)
Cc: [Sheldon Wasserman](#)
Subject: FW: Committee on Parks and Culture Meeting, September 2, 2025
Date: Tuesday, September 2, 2025 4:05:55 PM

Hi Kelsey,

Supervisor Wasserman would like these comments included into the record for today's Parks and Culture Meeting.

Thank you,

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Supporting County Board District Offices 3, 9, and 15
By achieving racial equity, Milwaukee County is the healthiest county in Wisconsin.

From: Scott Bush <scott@gmar.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 2, 2025 3:12 PM
To: Sheldon Wasserman <Sheldon.Wasserman@milwaukeecountywi.gov>; Felesia Martin <Felesia.Martin@milwaukeecountywi.gov>; Anne O'Connor <Anne.OConnor@milwaukeecountywi.gov>; Steve Taylor <Steve.Taylor@milwaukeecountywi.gov>; Juan Miguel Martinez <JuanMiguel.Martinez@milwaukeecountywi.gov>; Priscilla Coggs-Jones <Priscilla.CoggsJones@milwaukeecountywi.gov>; Jack Eckblad <Jack.Eckblad@milwaukeecountywi.gov>
Subject: Committee on Parks and Culture Meeting, September 2, 2025

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To: Members of the Committee on Parks and Culture,

From: Scott Bush, Vice President, PreserveMKE

I was at the meeting today and scheduled to speak; however, the meeting ran long and unfortunately, I had to leave for another meeting. My apologies. I did try to submit my comments via the website but apparently, they were not

received.

I would like to take this opportunity to submit the following comments:

A few years ago, MPM management told the public and elected officials that the current building, designed by the historic Eschweiler Architectural firm is beyond repair and unable to sustain its artifacts safely. MPM announced that it would cost more money to repair the existing building than it would to build a new one at a cost of 240 million dollars. That claim raised suspicion and concern with the public because the existing building is only 62 years old. We have also learned that major repairs were made to the building.

Preservation efforts by PreserveMKE began to examine these concerns. The MPM management maintained that the museum was moving because of its poor condition, and everything needed to be moved to a new, and safer facility. However, when the museum says “everything” is moving over, that only includes its artifacts. It is the “everything else” that has fueled major concern. Because everything else includes the very things that make the Milwaukee Public Museum famous, its dioramas and artwork.

Dr. Ellen Censky, President and CEO’s vision. Censky has stated that the current museum is “culturally incompetent.” The issue is also whether history will be rewritten, or other cultures’ histories erased, including much-loved exhibits that themselves are historical or artistic artifacts. The concern is that the museum has been completely non-transparent about which exhibits need “updating” due to racial and equity concerns and why.

MPM management’s disdain for the current museum is evident in its disregard for the current building. Many components are broken. Exhibits have been neglected and are dusty, lights are burned out and the outside of the building has been neglected with weeds growing in the landscape and trash strewn about.

The current Milwaukee Public Museum is a natural History Museum. However, the new museum will be called the Wisconsin Nature and Culture Museum of Wisconsin. Was that the real reason for the move rather than the condition of the building? That statement revealed a fundamental shift in the institution's identity—one the public was never clearly informed about. The destruction of the Streets of Old Milwaukee, MPS' most popular and beloved exhibit is not sitting well with thousands of citizens. I recently counted 140 works of art and murals painted within the world renown dioramas. These beloved historic and culturally significant works of art, created by notable artists, have been enjoyed by MPM visitors for decades. These works of art will be lost forever. I am confident that if the museum management had been transparent about the destruction of beloved dioramas and art, it is highly likely that the vote by Milwaukee County Supervisors to approve this project would have been different.

In a recent *Milwaukee Magazine* feature, Dr. Censky described the museum transition as “exciting and frustrating and intense,” and listed “public pushback” alongside complex logistics and fundraising. But for many Milwaukeeans, her framing of widespread community concern as a hindrance—rather than a crucial part of a public process—was deeply dismissive.

The Milwaukee Public Museum is a publicly funded institution. Milwaukee County residents not only own the building but also the more than 4 million artifacts and specimens that make up its collection. Taxpayers have contributed \$85 million toward the new project, \$45 million from the County and \$40 million from the State. The residents of Milwaukee County currently own everything—the building, and all its contents. The new museum, paid for in part by taxpayer money, will no longer be owned by Milwaukee County, but by a private management group. That is 45 million in taxpayer funds to pay for a building we will not own.


Milwaukee County owns these collections. These changes allow a private nonprofit—contracted to serve the public—to unilaterally decide the fate of

thousands of artifacts with no required public accountability.

The new museum is being built; however, that does not mean we should destroy the Milwaukee Public Museum and all it means to our community.

We believe history will not look kindly at these decisions.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Scott Bush, Vice President of Operations
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