



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Chris Abele

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DATE: May 19, 2015

TO: The Honorable Milwaukee Board of Supervisors

FROM: Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive

RE: County Board File No. 15-260 on authorizing Corporation Counsel to enter into initial discussions with Milwaukee Art Museum, Inc., (MAM) to explore the possibility of a sale or lease of O'Donnell Park and Parking Structure to MAM with a priority of retaining public access to the Park

I am returning County Board File No. 15-260 unsigned.

The County owns close to a thousand facilities and has a long list of deferred maintenance on these facilities. Over the last several years, we have gone through a rigorous analysis of which facilities bring value to Milwaukee County residents and the County needs to continue to own and maintain. Owning a parking garage is not a core mission of Milwaukee County and yet, with its debt and deferred maintenance, the garage continues to be a drain on County resources. Therefore, in an effort to decrease spending on such facilities and divert these taxpayer dollars to facilities and services that do enhance our mission, I made the recommendation to sell the garage to a community partner who would have paid the County the appraised value of \$14 million, made significant investments to the garage and park space on its roof, and continued to make the space accessible to the public.

Since the Board rejected Northwestern Mutual's offer to buy the O'Donnell garage, I have communicated with the Board about my interest in going through an RFP process to see if any other party can provide an offer to buy or develop that space that is as strong as the offer provided by NM. The NM deal set a minimum standard for what the County should expect in selling this garage.

The Milwaukee Art Museum should be able to respond to an RFP – just like anyone else who is interested in buying or developing this space. Through that process, if MAM, a publicly-subsidized entity, can demonstrate that they can provide value that matches or exceeds (without creating a double burden on taxpayers) NM's offer and that of any other respondents, I would be glad to move forward. Our responsibility to the people of Milwaukee County is to find the best opportunity that we can. I do not believe that limiting our options puts us in a position to fulfill this responsibility.