

Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

October 4, 2018

To the Honorable, Common Council
Of the City of Milwaukee

Honorable Members of the Common Council:

I am vetoing Common Council File Number 180813. This file amends the 2018 Positions Ordinance to create an Inspector General position in the City Clerk's Office, and states that position is intended to be exempt from civil service rules.

I share the sentiment of the Council that there is a benefit in having an Inspector General. However, if we move in this direction we need to do it right. That means the position needs to be free from political interference and needs to be empowered to investigate all aspects of city government including those under the jurisdiction of the City Clerk, absent political interference.

Under this file, the Inspector General would be a political appointee of the Common Council. Political issues and disagreements could easily determine what departments or individuals are investigated.

There are numerous other problems with a politically controlled Inspector General. Liquor License applicants and applicants for Community Development Block Grant funding would not have independent recourse if they felt their approval or denial was politically motivated.

In addition, whistleblowers could be deterred if they believed political influence could result in retaliation. Moreover, investigations into City Clerk and Council contracts would not have independent scrutiny.

Independent oversight requires neutrality to be effective and trusted by the public. Cities that have established an Inspector General Office have gone to extensive lengths to ensure independence from the Executive and Legislative branches of government. For example, some cities have independent budget appropriations, set terms of office, or citizen panels who recommend the hiring of an Inspector General.

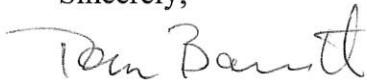
In his September 21, 2018 letter, Comptroller Martin Matson shares very similar concerns:

“Placing an Inspector General in the City Clerk’s Office provides the potential for politically motivated audits.”

I welcome effective and appropriate oversight, and support the checks and balances in place between my Administration, the Common Council, and the City Comptroller.

Let’s work together and do it right.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Barrett". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Tom Barrett
Mayor