

Alderman Backes Update

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Spring has sprung! It's been a CRAZY several weeks for yours truly. As most of you know, I direct the theater program at SMHS, and the last couple weeks leading up to the musical are always a huge time crunch.

We had a very successful run of *Legally Blonde*, and it was so great to see community members out embracing the arts. If you were one of the people in attendance, THANK YOU for the support!

While news is relatively quiet on the council front at the moment, there are a bunch of things happening around the city to highlight. Here's a quick overview!

Voting is happening now!

Early voting for the spring election has already begun, and election day itself is Tuesday, April 2. Voters may still go any time next week to log their votes at city hall. Remember to bring a photo ID.

On the ballot this spring: all aldermanic positions, two school board positions (with four candidates), and a referendum for the School District of South Milwaukee, plus all of the other regional/state/federal stuff. It *is* technically a presidential primary, but those primary races have already been decided, so we in Wisconsin don't get to make any real difference there this year.

This is one of the more consequential local elections we've had in recent memory. The referendum is probably the most important issue on the ballot (more on that later), but we have *two* contested alderperson races (mine included) and four eager and qualified candidates vying for two school board positions.

Please please *please* get out and vote. Erik has done a tremendous job of gathering information about all local candidates on this here website, so take the time to peruse those posts and learn more about the candidates on the ballot.

Our schools are CRUSHING IT

With the referendum on the ballot, I just wanted to take a moment to highlight a few incredible things happening in our schools at the moment.

First, we have three teachers at the high school who have received some impressive awards in the last week. Social studies teacher Heather Hanson and choir teacher Aimee Swanson both were named Herb Kohl Teacher Fellows. There are 100 recipients across the state each year, and those recipients receive public recognition and a \$6,000 grant. They also automatically

become candidates for Wisconsin Teacher of the Year. Aimee and Heather care so much about their students and are so deserving of this recognition.

English teacher Shelly Moore Krajacic was one of five teachers *nationwide* to be inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame. Shelly was assigned to be my mentor when I began working at SMHS and has quickly grown into a very good friend. She is an incredibly dynamic presence in the classroom and holds high but fair standards of all her students. I greatly look up to her and am so excited to see her take home this award.

Other school stuff: on Tuesday the 19th I attended the Lakeview Elementary School spring concert, which just so happened to be my K5 son's first ever SDSM music concert. To see him up there performing on the PAC for the first time was such a special moment for me and felt like the start of something beautiful. All credit in the world to Mrs. Tinsen, who put together a really fun program and did an outstanding job of preparing the kids and showcasing how much enthusiasm and energy there is at Lakeview right now. I'm still new to being a school parent, but I was definitely a proud Lakeview dad on Tuesday!

I mention all of these things because each of them individually completely reaffirmed beyond my own experiences as a high school teacher, theater director, and track coach how much this referendum means to our community. We really have something special in our community and schools, and I feel a responsibility as a parent and taxpayer to do everything I can to keep that momentum going.

I will proudly be voting "yes" for the referendum when I cast my ballot, and I hope you will join me. As you can see, we have so much to be proud of and to preserve.

Curb lawn plantings

As I mentioned, there haven't been a ton of huge developments this month coming from our council meetings, though there are certainly some big issues on the not-too-distant horizon. I'm particularly looking forward to getting more information at a future plan commission meeting about the future of the former gas station property on 10th and Marquette.

But one thing that *did* occur recently that will affect some people with spring now upon us (despite the snow) is the approval of an ordinance change that will allow for curb lawn plantings.

In the past, it has technically been against city ordinances to have any sort of plantings in the curb lawn (the grass between the sidewalk and the street). While that portion of the lawn is the property owner's responsibility to maintain, it is technically city property.

Reasonable curb lawn plantings will now be allowed, which makes plenty of sense to me, considering it's beautifying our city.

Reminder: SeeClickFix

I've been out in the community a lot lately knocking on doors and talking to people about the election (if I've missed or bypassed you, feel free to get in touch and I'm happy to meet up). I always start by asking if anyone has any issues or concerns they'd like me to be aware of.

Most people have been pretty happy with the state of things. When people do have issues to report, they're generally related to street, sidewalk, or alley maintenance, or similar types of issues.

I've pointed a lot of people to the SeeClickFix app, and many of them were unaware it existed. In case you didn't know, you can download the app for Android or iPhone and use it to quickly and easily report issues directly to the city. It's great for pointing out potholes, property maintenance issues, sidewalk defects, etc. You can also visit the [Request for Action](#) page on the city's website.

I'm always happy to help people out by facilitating these requests, but a lot of times I've noticed people aren't aware that this tool is available. It's extremely handy and our street department is absolutely fantastic about resolving issues in a very timely manner whenever possible. I recently had a constituent reach out about potholes in an alley near Sherman Ave, and the street department had the issue resolved within 24 hours.

Download it today and give it a shot!

HEY! There's a chance this is my final update as an active alderperson in South Milwaukee. I'm up for re-election in a week and a half, and you never know what's going to happen! Should this be it, I just want to thank you all for reading along. I've received a lot of great comments while I've been out at public events from people who read and appreciate these updates.

The entire reason I wanted to start doing this was because I felt like there was a lack of clear communication coming directly from elected officials about what's going on in the city. There's plenty of Facebook scuttlebutt, but it can be tough to cut through the (often quite rude) noise and determine what is and is not accurate. I've always done my best to provide clear, accurate information while occasionally lending my own opinions and insight.

Thank you for all the support! Parents and teachers, enjoy your spring break. And to all who celebrate, happy Easter this coming week (and Eid not long after).

Tim

If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, email Alderman Backes at tbackes@smwi.org.