

Item 23-0901: Resolution #7-R-23 - Local Government Funding Legislation Resolution Expressing Support for Wisconsin Act 12

Finance Committee

Mon, Jul 24, 2023 5:30PM

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 25:36

The last action item of the evening 23-0901 Resolution 7-R-23 Local government funding legislation resolution expressing support for Wisconsin act 12.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 25:49

Move to approve.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 25:52

I'll second for discussion.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 25:54

All right. We have a motion and a second. I think I will let either of the authors start and just kind of get us kicked off here. So, Alder Meltzer. what number? You have the district eight, and Alder Croatt, do you also

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 26:07

Attorney

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 26:08

You have Attorney. So, eight and attorney. Do either of you have a strong preference and who goes first? Otherwise...

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 26:13

Alder Meltzer can go first.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 26:14

Okay.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 26:16

Thank you. So, this resolution came from a template provided by the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. And I had some communications after this resolution was submitted. And Alderson Fenton reached out to me and I believe is prepared with an amendment that basically takes the template and elevates it to a level of making a much more sincere statement. So, I, because I—if I had—I wish I would have had more time to work on that template myself, but I'm really grateful for the time that Alderson Fenton put into it. That's all I have. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 27:00

Thank you.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 27:01

Thank you, Chair. Thank you to Alder Meltzer for asking me to look at cosigning onto this resolution. I—having served on the Council for a number of years, I know how much work has been going into this over the course of time. Mayor Hanna spent a lot of time trying to get something to come Appleton's

way and other municipalities, and I know current mayor Woodford has been working hard to go around the state and try to get something like this done. So, my reason for wanting to be part of part of it was the "therefore be it resolved" portion is, you know, sending a message to Madison thanking them for the work that finally got done. And I'm open to an amended version of this if that's what's coming.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 27:46

All right. So, I guess Alder Fenton, do you like to speak?

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 27:50

Yes, thank you Chair. I've provided everybody a copy. What I'd like to—I'd make a motion to amend by substitution with the language that's been provided to you. I emailed Alder Hartzheim. Hopefully she got that as well and provided a copy to the attorney,

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 28:11

All right, just real quick, looks like Alder Hartzheim you're indicating that you did receive this? Okay, just confirming. Thank you.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 28:17

So as Alder Meltzer said, when I heard this resolution read on Council on Wednesday, I had some concerns. And—because I heard a whole list of names, that included some—I mean, yes, it included the leadership of the Assembly and the Senate, but it included some local representatives, but not all of our local representatives.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 28:42

And also, while I'm happy that the that the shared revenue has increased the aid to municipalities, there are some strings attached here that really remove a lot of local control from cities. And we have less flexibility about decisions on public safety. Not that we would be looking to reduce police officers—we would love to have more—but it's removing flexibility. These additional provisions remove flexibility. It removes flexibility from our public health and from us in making public health decisions.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 29:32

And the formula that was applied is—you know, it weighs certain sizes of municipalities over others and is extremely punitive to the largest cities in Wisconsin, particularly Milwaukee who is in a real fiscal crisis right now. So, I didn't want to just say "Happy Happy Joy Joy. We're glad." But I also, as Alder Meltzer said, and he pointed that out to me, I wanted to really, really give credit to Mayor Woodford and all the other mayors in the state and the work that the League has done, traveling all over the state and to make our case.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 30:22

And I want to remind—you know, we need to remind ourselves that this isn't the state just sitting on a pot of money that just appeared. This is money that is paid by our citizens into as income tax to the state. And when, you know, by not sharing revenue, and we've all we testified before the Joint Finance Committee, we've wrote written letters, etc. But when they leave cities to put the burden of property taxes or referendums to tax themselves more, so I didn't want that to just go unsaid. So, I think rather than mentioning legislators, piecemeal, just leaving them all out, and then adding the did not acknowledgement of our mayors etc. is—I think it's a better document. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 31:21

All right. So, we do have a motion for the substitution amendment. I did not catch a second.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 31:26
I'll second.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 31:26
All right, we do have—okay, so we do have a motion and a second. So, discussion is on the item as amended. Alder Hartzheim, the floor is yours.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 31:37
Thank you, Chair. While I appreciate some of the changed verbiage in the amendments, the suggested amendments, I have equal concerns about the suggested changes that were meant—

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 31:53
Oh.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 31:54
Oh no.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 31:57
We will wait just a moment since it's trying to reconnect. That is some real inopportune network connection issues. To be working all this time, and now.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 32:11
I mean, it could be the cabin.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 32:14
Right. No, yeah. No, no, sorry. I'm not trying to imply that it's the city's. No, but nonetheless. All right. If Alder Hartzheim is able to reconnect, we'll go back to her. So, anyone else have any comments or questions on the amended item here? Alder Van Zeeland.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 32:42
Thank you, Chair.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 32:44
Actually, Alder Hartzheim it looks like we just go you back. We were just about to move on from you. So, Alder Hartzheim, you can carry on where you left off, and then we'll go to Alder van Zeeland.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 32:54
Thank you, I was just gonna end it with I would I would suggest everyone be very cautious about signing on to either the amended or the original version of this. And again, my opinion has always been, as an alderman, has always been that a non-action type of resolution is less of what I feel that we should be doing as aldermen in the city. So, this is taking time away from the things that are vital to us as aldermen. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 33:24
Alright, and then Alder van Zeeland.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 33:26
Thank you, Chair. I guess if we're gonna talk about time spent elsewhere, a lot of us in this room spent time working on this shared revenue. And that goes—you know, we're not going to have a resolution to thank all of you for your hard work. But, you know, a lot of this does seem a lot like putting forth effort

for something that was broken on purpose. However, I think it's important to give credit where credit is due. And we did the hard work to get this shared revenue along with mayors and other representatives. And I think that we should be thankful and express our thanks. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 34:04

All right. Anyone else? This is on the amendment. Seeing none, we'll go ahead and vote. All those in favor of the amendment say aye.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 34:15

All right. We have three ayes. All nays—er all opposed? Nay. So, we have two and abstained zero. So, the amendment passes. So now we will debate the item as amendment—amended, sorry.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 34:28

Chair, could you clarify the vote?

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 34:30

Sorry, it was three in favor. It was two against. Sorry, I kind of—

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 34:34

Who were the nays?

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 34:35

The nays were myself and Alder Hartzheim. So sorry.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 34:37

Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 34:38

I started to choke over my words a little bit there. So definitely did not help with the clarity, but I think we're good now. So, Alder Hartzheim, if you want to lead us off on discussion on the amended item. Go ahead.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 34:50

Thank you, chair. As I mentioned earlier, when we were talking about the amendments, there—I have concerns with signing on to anything that is expressed as far as concerns detailing the details of—detailing the details of the amended shared revenue.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 35:14

So, first of all, I would begin with—again, this is a non-action item that's coming before us as a Council. And I think that that's an unimportant—well, I wouldn't say unimportant, but it's less important to me as a alderman. My constituents it is want action from their alderman, not just words. I understand what Alder van Zeeland was saying as far as we should be grateful, and I am grateful, but we can be individually grateful rather than signing off in a just words resolution. This is not—none of you is surprised that I feel this way. And I don't think my constituents will be either. This is just something that I feel is less important as work that we aldermen do. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 36:01

All right, thank you. Alder Croatt.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 36:04

Thank you, chair. There is action tied to this resolution. And I would encourage everybody to support it. A lot of the time that's been spent is do not much greater than the amount of time that staff is going to take to send a copy of the resolution to Madison and wherever else it needs to go. No—you know, I agree with Alder Hartzheim that, you know, some of these resolutions that we look at don't have, you know, a certain type of, a certain level of action to them. This is one that I can get behind because it's just—it's been something that's been going on for so many years, and we finally got to a point—and the amount of staff time that we'll have to commit to this is very minimal. So, I would encourage everybody to support the amended version.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 36:49

All right, thank you. Is there anyone else? Alder van Zeeland.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 36:55

I just want to add that this is a resolution about a collaboration that takes place between this government and the state government. That is something that actually occurs. It is an action. We lobbied for this through the League of Municipalities, but also individually. And so, I don't see this as inaction. I see this as do not stating an action as Alder Croatt said but also stating how we feel about things moving forwards so that we know where we start next time. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 37:28

Thank you. Alder Croatt?

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 37:30

Yeah, thanks, Chair. I just wanted to add that writing resolutions like this and supporting them and voting for them does not prevent us from doing all the other work that we can do to take action within our districts. So, it's not an either or. It's not do this work or do something else. It's do this work and the other work that you want to do for your constituents. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 37:55

Thank you. Alder Fenton.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 37:57

And I don't want to restate what everybody has stated, but by doing the work we got the funding so that we can do more for our citizens or borrow less, or you know, not have to go to them for that tax property tax money. So, it's do not an action and it's, after the fact, expressing gratitude for the results of that action, I think. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 38:27

All right. Thank you. Anyone else? Including any it is alders that are present have any thoughts to share? Alder Alfheim, microphone number, please. There you go. The floor is yours.

Alderson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 38:43

Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the substituted version. I had a little bit of an issue in in the beginning with the names on it. I do believe that this was a massive cooperative effort. And I think that it is worthy of saying thank you to listening to us. And that is a big deal. I know in this chamber, one of our colleagues at one point had made a comment that it would never happen. When we talked about wanting more and expecting more from the state, it would never happen. Those were the words we all heard together.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 39:15

It did happen, because we worked hard at it and they listened. So, with that in mind, the amended version, in my opinion is perfectly acceptable, perfectly acceptable to say, if we work together, good things can happen. And all credit is given to everybody that was involved in that. So, I thank you for the amended version. And all of the efforts. I would support this.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 39:38

All right, thank you. Alder Hayden, yeah, if you just want to grab one of the mics. Director one? Okay.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 39:47

I appreciate what we're doing here. But I have concerns about thanking them when municipalities that are under 110,000 are receiving a 10% increase while we're—or we're seeing a 10% increase while those that are—er 20% while we're receiving 10%. So, I don't think we're receiving equitable revenue sharing, or revenues being shared from the state. So that's my concern is I feel like smaller communities are getting a larger share of the pie than we're getting and our dollars won't go as far.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 40:21

All right, thank you. Anybody else? Alder van Zeeland?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 40:26

Thank you, Chair. I think that this body has sent requests and resolutions to the state before sometimes being demanding, and part of politics is that if you are going to ask for things, you should also say thank you when you receive them.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 40:44

Anyone else? All right. I'll wrap this up here. I just have a real quick comment. I don't want to keep you all sitting here, since I'm sure this is a real thrilling conversation for some, but I do tend to agree with Alder Hartzheim in these types of resolutions where the end result is saying a letter. I realize a lot of people worked really hard to get shared revenue increased, but my feeling is the result that the way it was done, the amount, what ended up being the end result here, is more close to an admission of the mistakes made in the last decade. Because this—I mean, we're back to where we were now 14-15 years ago. And that's not even taking into account infla—inflation from that time period.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 41:30

To me, what the legislation legislature did, and everyone down there is really—it's more about saving face, I think is my feeling on this. I just don't feel like we should be patting them on the back for doing the bare minimum to be able to say they did something. I know this—a lot of people worked hard and a lot of people are trying to say this is a historic win. I don't see it that way myself. So, I am going to vote against this.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 42:00

So go ahead now. All those in favor? Opposed, nay? Abstentions? So, the motion passes three to two with myself and Alders Hartzheim voting against.