

**Item 23-0924: Recognition for two organization's work toward the passage of
Assembly Shared Revenue Bill 245**

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

Common Council

Wed, Aug 02, 2023, 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 07:57

Alright, next, I have some recognitions that I'd like to share. The Council will be talking about some recognitions, maybe, in their action items, but I'd like to share some recognitions related to Shared Revenue Bill 245, which became Act 12.

Mayor Jake Woodford 08:20

There was a great deal of advocacy on the part of many folks in our community, local governments across the state, collaborations across different units of government, which is unusual to see cities, municipalities, towns, counties working together in advocacy on an issue. But there has been, I think, some unsung advocacy that I'd like to recognize, and that is on the part of local organizations that that joined together in the in the advocacy efforts, recognizing the challenges that we face as local governments to fund the critical services that all of our residents rely on.

Mayor Jake Woodford 09:03

So, with that, I'd like to first welcome up the representatives of the League of Women Voters from the city of Appleton for your recognition. So, deeply appreciate the work of the League in learning about this issue and then helping members and members of the community understand the importance of reform to local government funding. So deeply appreciate the work of the League and thank you for your partnership on this legislation. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 09:45

All right. The next group I want to recognize is the Appleton Concerned Taxpayers. So, if representatives from Concerned Taxpayers want to come forward. I would say our colleagues, Walter Blank and Mike Thomas and also Deb Blank are what I would call frequent fliers to Mayor's office hours and also familiar faces at Council meetings in your advocacy for fiscal stewardship here at the city of Appleton. And when we got to talking about the issue of local government funding and the very real issues that we face as communities, our—the folks at the Concern with the Concerned Taxpayers recognize those challenges and joined in advocacy work, and really deeply appreciate your contributions to the advocacy. And so, I want to present you with this recognition also. So, thank you very much.

Mike Thomas (Concerned Appleton Taxpayers) 10:51

Thank you very much, Mayor, and Chairman Can Zeeland, and also the distinguished Council members. A lot of people know I've been at these meetings a lot of times, and in the past, I think some people have thought that we're just concerned about the expense side, which we are. But we basically had looked at this and lobbied heavily with the legislature on both sides of the aisle to bring this to fruition. Chris knows with the county, we've been working on that. **[I believe he was referring to Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) who is also an Outagamie County Supervisor.]** I was a county supervisor for 26 years. So, we've been pounding on them for a couple of decades.

Mike Thomas (Concerned Appleton Taxpayers) 11:25

So, we really appreciate the efforts. We really appreciate the communication with the mayor, because we do meet with him about once a month. We have some issues that we want to push, and we'll be looking at the budget. But we really appreciate you, and especially you mayor listening to us as far as representing the taxpayer group. So again, thanks for the acknowledgement. And we look forward to working with you in the future on both the expense side and hopefully on the revenue side. Thank you.

[Cut]

Mayor Jake Woodford 37:14

First is 23-0901 Resolution 7-R-23 Local government funding legislation resolution expressing support for Wisconsin Act 12. We have a motion and a second to approve. We'll open the floor for discussion. Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 37:37

Thank you, chair. It comes as no surprise to anyone in this room that I will be voting no on this. And the reasons are pretty clear. I've regularly stated that a actionless resolution is not something that I feel that we as local aldermen should be taking part in. I sometimes write better than I speak so I will quickly read what I wrote.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 38:04

I voted and spoke against this resolution as a pat on the back for some legislators. And what's worse is that this resolution, as amended, is now a bipolar passive-aggressive piece. Not only does it proclaim that the Common Council of the City of Appleton praises and expresses gratitude for the Act, but in the next whereas clause it slaps the hands of state legislators for not performing the redistribution or the writing of the legislation in the liking of this particular resolution's authors or the amending author. This is a statement of political leanings of some of the members of the Council, not a statement of how many of the citizens of Appleton feel or as I feel about Act 12 or the practice of revenue sharing itself. I would encourage my colleagues to vote against this. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 39:05

Any further discussion? Alder Hayden.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 39:10

Yes, I would happily join Alder Hartzheim in recommending that we not vote—we vote against this. Um, when I look through what was passed, along with giving municipalities sharing revenue with them at a higher rate than they had and correcting the mistake that was made about a decade ago to help us pay for things like police and firefighters, there's some things that are very troubling in this bill as well. One example is banning Local Advisory Referendum questions on everything except projects funded with property tax. So, if we have issues with fair maps, marijuana legislation, or abortion rights, our city can no longer pass referendums on those. The money that comes from this can only be spent on emergency medical services, police, fire protection, and public works. It also prohibits our local public health officer from issuing mandate to close any business in response to an outbreak or epidemic. These are just three examples of ways that we're being micromanaged through this bill, along with getting the revenue sharing. So, I have a lot of concerns about what's baked in the bill that we're saying thank you for that limits our ability to act as a Common Council. So, I will be voting against this.

Mayor Jake Woodford 40:31

Any further discussion? Alder Fenton.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 40:34

Why my requests to—I don't know why it's not showing. It shows I have one.

Mayor Jake Woodford 40:38

I'm sure it was an accident. [Note: they were talking about the computer system.]

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 40:39

Thank you, Your Honor. So, I talked about this in the Finance Committee meeting. When this resolution was read in the previous Council meeting, my first thought is, "I can't support this." And then—but not for the—unlike some of my colleagues, I do believe that a resolution that doesn't have a specific action can be useful, that presenting the voice of the legislative body of the city.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 41:12

But similar to Alder Hayden, I have huge concerns with Act 12 as it passed. I presented written testimony to the Joint Finance Committee, I attended local listening sessions with my legislators to talk about how I felt about the, at that time, the prospect of not increasing shared revenue very much at all, when the state was sitting on a \$7 billion surplus. But as I went home and calmed down a little bit, I thought, "Well, this thing's gonna pass because it says, 'we're grateful for getting these additional funds.'" I said, "I can't let this pass just as a pat on the back, as it were, to specific named legislators, when some of the legislators who held town halls and listen to us speak about our concerns about this weren't mentioned."

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 42:18

I consulted my state representative about, and asked her opinion. She told me that she preferred to not have her name on this, because of some issues that she had against the bill. So, I worked on what—and after reaching out to at least to the lead author—worked on what I thought was a compromise where we said, "Yes, we're grateful to you for doing your jobs." Now, perhaps that's bipolar and passive aggressive, but you can appreciate somebody doing a good thing without telling them that they've done a perfect thing. And the legislature did a decent thing here.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 43:09

They—it was inequitable the way they applied it. And with—I am in total agreement with Alder Hayden, that the restrictions on local control are fairly abhorrent. And the City of Appleton and cities our size didn't fare badly at all. Milwaukee was essentially punished just for being Milwaukee in in Act 12.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 43:43

So again, my goal was to not let this pass and with—you know, at least one of our state legislators wrote to us and said, "You should be very grateful that what we've done." And yes, I'm a little grateful. I'm not very grateful. I don't think you've done perfectly. I think you've done okay, and you've made a—they've made a step towards righting the wrongs of the past more than a decade. But I did want it said that it's not all good.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 44:18

So given the prospect of a feel-good resolution passing with—that I would have to vote against—or actually having the Council state, "Yes, you did a right thing, but you didn't do the totally right thing." I submitted the amended version. I'm grateful to my colleagues on the Finance Committee who voted for the amended version. I completely understand those who didn't. And I hope if we vote for something, it will be for the amended version. But in all honesty, the part that I think is most important is similar to what the mayor did at the beginning of this meeting, which was to recognize some folks who worked really hard. And in the case of the amended resolution, those folks were our mayor who went to every single listening session that was held in

geographically not convenient parts of the state for those of us in northeastern Wisconsin, my colleagues on the Council who showed up to state our case to the members of the legislature who did have town halls and who did come to Northeast Wisconsin to hear us, and to the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. And I know that the ledger—that the resolution started as a suggestion because the League worked really hard. They're our lobbying group, and they suggested that, you know, "Hey, if we want to keep having them listen to us, maybe we want to, you know, have our elevator speech, but then we want to thank them for listening to our elevator speech." So, I felt it was important to include those people too.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 46:03

So, on this very, very long speech, I hope that people will support the amended version, and I'll be voting for it. But if we choose to not say anything at all to the legislators, let's just remember to be grateful to those other people that we've added. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 46:25

Alder Meltzer.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 46:28

Thank you. I brought this resolution forward because of my appreciation for the hard work that the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and everyone else did. Basically, this was a suggestion from the League that I saw as a way to cap off something that really was a very big deal. And even though I agree with my colleagues who have spoken before me that there are a lot of issues and concerns with the legislation, it still, it is a definite success as far as the lobbying effort and the hard work that people like Mayor Woodford and others had done to secure it. So that's the reason why I brought it forward.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 47:24

I did not anticipate or intend for it to be controversial in any way, and I really, really appreciate my colleague Aldersperson Fenton for the amendment that really, I think, made it a much more meaningful statement. And I think that while we struggle over the years to get work done, I think we also have to be cognizant, not just of the relationships that we're building, but the relationships that other groups and networks throughout our state are building around the work that we're doing.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 48:00

So, I think that, again going back to the presentations that the mayor did today to the League of Women Voters and the Concerned Taxpayers, I think that there is definitely something important here in how people were able to unite across very diverse ideologies to lobby around a singular issue together. And I think that that was good work, and we can continue doing more good work going forward.

Mayor Jake Woodford 48:36

Alder Alfheim.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 48:40

Thank you, Chair. The thing that's frustrating about these resolutions is the amount of time we spend on them and the, in essence, the effect they end up having. And the reality is what we are arguing about is whether we should send a thank you note or not. Old school says if something good happens, you send a thank you note.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 48:58

In this case, we're not thanking them for the world. We're thanking them for paying attention for the first time in 10 years. We're thanking them for the efforts of those of us in this room who went out and screamed from

the rooftops. I cannot tell you how many times I said the word "shared revenue" in the last one year, shared revenue, shared revenue, share revenue. I go to bed thinking about shared revenue right now. And I will continue to because our job is not done, which is why there's some there's still some, you know, worry in here.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 49:28

We are not saying congratulations for solving the world's problems. We are saying thank you. For the first time in a decade, multiple sources of people put their efforts towards something that in the end was good. Was it good enough? I don't care. It was good, and it's the first time we've had it in 10 years. So, I would say let's send a thank you note. Perhaps it'll encourage more continued behavior like that.

Mayor Jake Woodford 49:57

Alder Schultz.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 50:01

Thank you, Mayor. This is still a little challenging for all the reasons my colleagues have already brought up. I think the people that we're trying to thank for the good work and stewardship in moving these actions forward are not actually listed in the resolution. I don't see the League, I don't see the mayor's name, I don't see all the others who were part of the process as we've heard, trying to move this ball forward and thank those individuals. Who we're thanking are the people that are forced to make this vote and finally recognize that it's, you know, a decade or more since we should have done that. So, the thank you, for us a little hollow to me, because it's not directed that people that we really need to be thanking.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 50:46

I get that we're trying to recognize that the state has finally done the right thing. But then again, I also share Alderman Hayden's concerns that there are other things here. That this is not simply just about recognize that we finally have, after a long period of time without it, equilibrated ourselves to some revenue that we've needed. And so, I'm gonna vote against it purely because the people that we should be thanking aren't listed in this. And the ones we are thanking, that's kind of their job to do the work. But it's not recognizing where the effort was. So, I'm gonna vote against it. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 51:24

Alder van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 51:27

Thank you, chair. An important part of politics and something I think our citizens would like to see more of is building relationships and compromise. And I think saying "thank you" is part of that. This body has had no problem in the past asking the legislature to take action, and so it's only right to say "Thank you."

Mayor Jake Woodford 51:49

Alder Wolff.

Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 51:51

Thank you, chair. I will also be voting against this resolution, and I'm asking my colleagues to vote against it as well. I think it's a little unnecessary, and I just overall don't like to feel that we're getting in this room. And I think unless we're all united in it, we shouldn't do it.

Mayor Jake Woodford 52:17

Alder Croatt.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 52:18
Call the question?

Mayor Jake Woodford 52:19
You were the last speaker in the queue. So—

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 52:21
I waited a while

Mayor Jake Woodford 52:22
—it wasn't anything you did. We were getting there. So, a motion's been made to call the question. We have a second to call the question. All those in favor of calling the question please signify by saying Aye. Any opposed? All right, with one opposed the question has been called. So please cast your votes.

Mayor Jake Woodford 52:57
Motion fails 6 to 9.