



The Common Council approved the streetcar plan, but the final vote is still delayed until Feb. 10.

## Common Council delays final streetcar vote until Feb. 10

by **OnMilwaukee.com Staff Writers**

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This morning, the Milwaukee Common Council voted, 10-5, in favor of Mayor Barrett's hotly debated Milwaukee streetcar plan. However, the final approval for the long-argued streetcar will still be delayed until the council's next meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 10.

Those voting in favor of Barrett's \$124 million plan included Aids. Nik Kovac, Ashanti Hamilton, Bob Bauman, Milele Coggs, Willie Wade, Jose Perez, Terry Witkowski, Tony Zielinski, Russell Stamper and council president Michael Murphy. The opposition included Aids. Joe Davis, James Bohl, Robert Donovan, Robert Puente and Joe Dudzik.

The key vote leading to the delayed final decision belonged to Zielinski, an opponent of Barrett's streetcar plan. For this meeting, however, he shifted his vote over to the pro-streetcar majority in order to quickly ask for a motion to reconsider the matter at the next meeting.

The ensuing vote to reconsider the measure went 7-8, with Davis, Bohl, Puente, Zielinski, Murphy, Donovan and Dudzik voting in favor of the delay and Hamilton, Kovac, Bauman, Stamper, Coggs, Wade, Perez and Witkowski voting it down. However, only three votes were necessary to hold the final vote until the next meeting.

The goal of the delay was to give more time for opponents of the streetcar plan to gather the signatures necessary – approximately 31,000 voter signatures – to force a binding referendum on the matter. The signatures are due by Feb. 8.

Before the vote, several aldermen spoke on both sides of the issue, beginning with Kovac in favor of the streetcar plan.

"If you only build a streetcar and do nothing else, will that be the magic silver bullet that drastically improves our tax base? No, we need to do it in concert with other smart decisions," Kovac said.

"There's a whole range of things a city has to do – not the least of which and in fact the most important thing is having a safe city, having a clean city. So the money spent on police, firefighters and public works matters more than the streetcar; no one ever said it didn't. That is a fundamental, important ingredient in the success of a city. But this is one part of a strategy that's a part of a strategy that other cities have done and seen results."

Zielinski, Donovan and Davis also spoke during the meeting, opposing the streetcar based on future expenses and current, pressing issues facing the city that also need addressing.

Common Council President Michael Murphy stepped down from his podium to make a statement about the debate – the heated, in his opinion, extremism in favor or against the plan – risk and his stance in favor of the streetcar but also in favor of allowing the referendum petition drive to play out.

"Citizens of good will are willing to go out in the middle of winter – where it's 20 below zero in some cases – to go out and meet with citizens and go and collect signatures to determine whether or not they support this via direct legislation referendum," Murphy stated. "We should not cavalierly or carelessly disregard the wishes of those citizens."

Web address: <http://onmilwaukee.com/articles/streetcarvotepostponed.html>

