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EYES ON MILWAUKEE

Streetcar Approved, but Held

Large majority votes to approve streetcar, but parliamentary maneuver puts issue on hold until February 10th meeting.

By Jeramey Jannene - Jan 21st, 2015 10:44 am

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In a move that will keep the Milwaukee Streetcar starter system in limbo until February 10th, the project was approved, and then held over at today's Milwaukee Common Council meeting. The rarely used parliamentary move relies on a project opponent voting for the project, then asking to reconsider their vote. With a three-vote minority required to grant the reconsideration, the file is entered into the journal to be re-voted on the next meeting.

Today's vote came as a surprise to no one, as during a pro-streetcar press conference yesterday project sponsors announced they had the votes to approve the project. In an anti-streetcar press conference later yesterday, project opponents announced their intent to use the rarely-used maneuver to hold the project. There was, however, one surprise announcement.

The Murphy Twist

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What was a surprise at today's vote is the supporters picking up a key vote. Council President **Michael Murphy** ceded his chairmanship temporarily to Ald. **Milele**

Coggs to make a speech from the council floor.

During that speech Murphy repeatedly chided the extremism on both sides of the debate, noting that opponents bill the project as the worst thing since ebola, and proponents argue it's the second coming.

Murphy also said he supports the right of the petition drive to play itself out, and supported holding the matter until the meeting on February 10th.

In his speech, Murphy also noted that the streetcar is a risk, but added, "there is risk in everything in life."

The Vote

With the end result being essentially pre-ordained, floor debate was expected to be kept brief. That brevity, as numerous council members referenced, still resulted in almost a half hour of debate on the issue.

When the final vote was taken, council members **Ashanti Hamilton**, **Nik Kovac**, **Robert Bauman**, **Milele Coggs**, **Willie Wade**, Murphy, **Jose Perez**, **Terry Witkowski**, **Tony Zielinski** and **Russell Stamper** all voting for the streetcar.

Alderman Zielinski, a streetcar opponent, immediately moved for reconsideration. This parliamentary move allows him to hold the project for a session and change his vote, as long as a three-vote minority approves the move. He received six votes to do so, the five anti-streetcar votes (**Joe Davis**, **Jim Bohl**, **Robert**

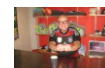


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Rock Roundup:

Donovan, Robert Puente, and Joe Duazik) and Murphy, who had previously expressed his support for the delay.

Zileinski's move enters the file into the journal, which will open it for debate and a final vote at the February 10th Common Council meeting.

Referendum


Project opponents have repeatedly argued a referendum is needed, and are circulating petition papers to force a referendum on having a streetcar referendum. My colleague **Bruce Murphy** has reported on the details of this extensively, including the support from a Koch brothers- funded group and the legal difficulties in executing the maneuver while the item is up for approval.

Project sponsors have responded to the referendum proponents with a number of responses including that they're elected to make tough decisions, that multiple elections have been held after votes have been taken with not a single anti-streetcar candidate replacing a pro-streetcar official and that the issue has been under debate since 1991.

UPDATE: Four of the five streetcar files were held using the reconsideration maneuver. That maneuver was used last time on the fifth file, the creation of TID planning agreement between the city and the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee (RACM), and required a majority vote to reconsider again. It received only 5 of the needed 8 votes and was then approved. This fifth file was approved after our article was published.

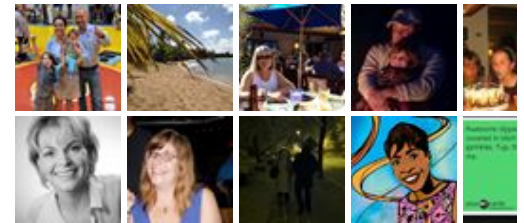


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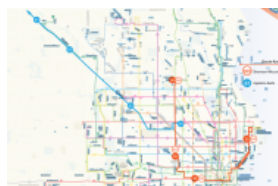
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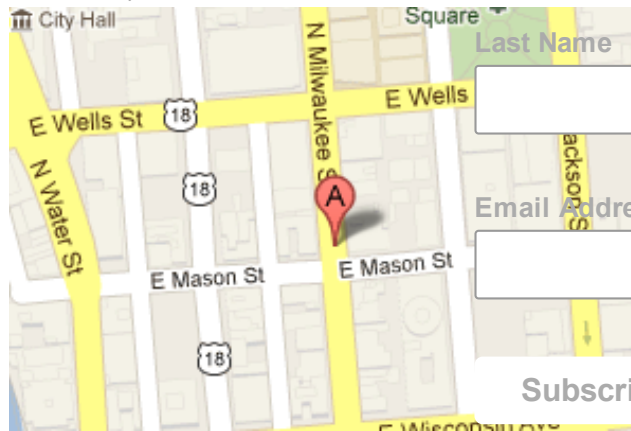
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