



MANITOWOC PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTERS
International Association of Firefighters
Local 368 AFL-CIO, CLC
P.O. Box 368, Manitowoc, WI 54221-0368

February 15, 2023

Mayor Justin M. Nickels
City of Manitowoc
900 Quay Street
Manitowoc, WI 54220

City of Manitowoc Common Council
Council Chambers, first floor
900 Quay St.
Manitowoc, WI 54220

Dear Mayor Nickels and Common Council Members:

What follows relates to City of Manitowoc Alderperson Steve Czekala's threat to "beat the hell out of . . . union brothers" made at the February 6, 2023 meeting of the City of Manitowoc Personnel Committee meeting.

To be clear, Alderperson Czekala's threats are both plainly prohibited and illegal: The threats violate the Common Council's Code of Conduct,¹ amount to an illegal threat toward union personnel pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 111.70(3)(a)1 and 3, and violate union members' rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association guaranteed by the First Amendment to The United States Constitution.

By way of background, Alderperson Czekala's threats responded to requests by two City of Manitowoc firefighters (Firefighter Seth Loberger and Firefighter Tyler Tews) for temporary relief from the City's residency requirement. As can be seen in the video recording of the February 6 meeting,² the firefighters requests were made respectfully, and (prior to Alderperson Czekala's threats) the discussion concerning the requests was professional and appropriate. What then prevailed upon Alderperson Czekala such that he believed it to be necessary to threaten physical violence against Firefighter Loberger's and Tews' union brothers is unclear, but at the 12:20 mark of the video, Alderperson Czekala said to Firefighter Loberger and Tews the following: "If you guys have any other union brothers that you're working with, this is a one and only time, next person that comes in here with a request like this I'll beat the hell out of them."³

¹ See, inter alia, Common Council Code of Conduct Numbers 2, 3.

²https://manitowoc.granicus.com/player/clip/1352?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=10c6efaf910aee3bec43b1275712b88d

³ Id. at 12:20 (emphasis added)



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As noted above, Alderperson Czekala's threats violate the Council's Code of Conduct, as well as both state and federal law. Even apart from these (and perhaps other) violations, Alderperson Czekala's threats have absolutely no place in civil discourse, and reveal a plain and overt prejudice against the union. Accordingly, by this correspondence, we the undersigned hereby request the following:

- At the Common Council's next meeting, Alderperson Czekala publicly apologize for his threats and retract them entirely;
- At the same meeting, Alderperson Czekala publicly acknowledge that his threats toward the Union were illegal, and publicly commit to never again making such a threat;
- Alderperson Czekala to be immediately removed from the City of Manitowoc's Personnel Committee, and immediately removed from all matters involving and/or related in any way to, the City of Manitowoc Professional Fire Fighters Union, Local 368.

We appreciate your attention to the concerns raised above. We look forward to your response.

Bradley Olivera
President of Manitowoc Professional Firefighters Association Union
IAFF Local 368

- c. Alderperson Bill Schlei
Alderperson Brett Vanderkin
Alderperson Chad Beeman
Alderperson Darian Kaderabek
Alderperson Eric Sitkiewitz
Alderperson Jim Brey
Alderperson Michael Cummings
Alderperson Steven Czekala
Alderperson Tim Boldt
Alderperson Todd Reckelberg