

Milwaukee County Supervisor Haas: Calls for renewed search for Parks Director

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MILWAUKEE – County Supervisor Jason Haas, Chair of the Committee on Parks, Energy and Environment, called on County Executive Chris Abele to renew his search for a Parks director today, and announced his support for Jim Sullivan to return to his role as director of the Department of Child Support Services.

Sullivan did not earn sufficient votes to be confirmed today as head of the Milwaukee County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture.

“I ask County Executive Abele to act quickly to submit Jim Sullivan’s appointment to his former position of Director of Child Support Services so we can keep his talent and leadership skills. My constituents don’t support a vision for our parks that includes closing pools, promoting paid parking, or increasing the wheel tax to pay for parks services, and that’s why I’m calling on County Executive Abele to renew his search for a Parks Director that has a proven record of advocating for parks. We’ve seen two unexplained departures of Parks directors under this county executive, and we’ve got to make sure our next director is the best possible choice,” said Haas.

Sullivan’s brief tenure as Acting Director of the Parks Department was marred by controversy, including the Abele Administration’s announcement that it would close the David F. Schulz Aquatic Center in Lincoln Park, and an attempt to implement a

pay-to-park plan in County parks.

The County Board of Supervisors took action to keep Schulz open. After a public meeting on paid parking that was required by supervisors' amendment to the budget, Abele dropped his proposal.

County Executive Abele announced his appointment of Sullivan to head the Parks Department in December, not long after the unexplained departure of the previous Parks Director, John Dargle.

Supervisor Haas repeatedly asked County Executive Abele to explain the sudden departure of Dargle when the Committee on Parks, Recreation and Culture met in January to first consider Sullivan's appointment, but did not receive an answer.

Abele fired Dargle's predecessor, Sue Black, without an explanation in 2012.