

Milwaukee DSA: Despite clarity of community voices, Board of Supervisors delays County Jail and HOC communication reform at the start of Black History Month

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MILWAUKEE — Current policies, created by then-Sheriff David Clarke, maintained by now-Sheriff Earnell Lucas, charge residents using the phones from the County Jail and HOC 21 cents per minute – the highest chargeable amount allowed by the Federal Communication Commission.

Some members of the Board of Supervisors worked to change this policy, but their efforts were all but defeated on the very day the Board recognized Black History Month. Supervisor Ryan Clancy drafted [Resolution 21-763](#), a proposal to provide at least 90 minutes of no-cost video and voice calls per day for residents at the County Jail and HOC. Many community members supported Supervisor Clancy's resolution, effectively advocating for other County Board members to support it.

Organizers with the Milwaukee chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) secured commitments from a majority of the County Board to pass this important resolution, even though Supervisors Liz Sumner, Willie Johnson, Shawn Rolland, Sheldon Wasserman, Patti Logsdon, Anthony Staskunas, and John Weishan refused to listen to the clarity of community voices. DSA Members within Supervisor Willie Johnson's District 13 (Riverwest, Harambee, and surrounding areas) went as far as to put together a petition asking him to support this resolution. When the 104 collected signatures were handed to Supervisor Johnson in person he said that he was still going to vote against the resolution because he didn't want to lose the

County's share (2 million) of the 5.1 million "revenue stream", claiming that it would be too damaging to the Sheriff's budget.

The resolution was still poised to pass with a razor thin majority. Then suddenly, Supervisor Shawn Rolland from District 6 introduced a last minute amendment that greatly weakened Supervisor Clancy's resolution. Instead of entering into a "Request for Proposal" phase immediately the amendment changed the language to say the County Board would make *"a commitment to lowering each year the cost of video and voice calls to residents in the Criminal Justice Facility and House of Correction to free or no more than is needed to cover reasonable costs to provide and maintain the communication equipment"*, which would give the moderates on the County Board the leeway they were looking for to kick the can down the road indefinitely. Supervisors Joseph Czarnezki, Felesia Martin, Eddie Cullen, Jason Haas, and Marcelia Nicholson who had previously said they would vote for the resolution, supported this destructive amendment, turning their backs on the people of Milwaukee County. This last minute amendment created by Supervisor Rolland can be viewed as a sneaky way for moderate supervisors to vote in favor of a resolution that the public wants while simultaneously killing it.

We resoundingly denounce this decision and call on all residents of Milwaukee County to take action and tell their County Supervisors that they are extremely disappointed in the way that this resolution was squashed. In addition, Milwaukee DSA has two endorsed candidates in Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors races this cycle. [Eric Rorholm](#) is looking to replace Sheldon Wasserman in District 3 and [Juan Miguel Martinez](#) is running for an open seat in District 12. Please join us in [volunteering](#) for these candidates as it's a really great way to replace do-nothing moderates on the County Board.

Lastly, we want to recognize and thank Supervisors Shea, Taylor, Coggs-Jones, Goodwin, and Clancy for supporting a resolution that would have put a decisive end to one of many racist policies harming our city. Supervisor Rolland's amendment turned the decisive victory into a years-long protracted struggle. By voting with Rolland, instead of the position their communities demanded of them, Supervisors Czarnezki, Martin, Cullen, Haas, and Nicholson set back the movement against racism in our city.