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Capital Improvements Committee learns that Barrett Administration may be abandoning alleys throughout the city

**Statement of Alderman Robert J. Bauman
October 22, 2019**

Recently the Capital Improvements Committee met to review the city's capital budget and learned that the Barrett Administration has decided to effectively abandon alleys throughout the city. The committee paid particular attention to a line item in the capital budget for the Department of Public Works which showed no appropriation for alley reconstruction for the second consecutive year. As Committee Chair I asked the City Engineer whether this represented a decision to basically abandon alleys in the city. He acknowledged that it was. He elaborated by stating the administration viewed alleys as private driveways for the property owners abutting the alleys and that abutting property owners would have to shoulder a much higher share of reconstruction costs for the city to resume alley reconstruction work. Under current law, abutting property owners pay 50% of alley reconstruction costs. A 90% or even a 100% cost share (with the city absorbing the engineering costs) was suggested.

Whether alleys should or should not be abandoned and whether abutting property owners should pay 90% or 100% of the reconstruction costs is a significant policy decision that should not be buried in the budget. There should be a full and transparent discussion of these policy choices.

In the meantime, the Common Council needs to approve a budget in the next several weeks. Accordingly I will be offering a budget amendment that would add \$500,000 to the capital budget for alley reconstruction so that at least some alley reconstruction work can occur in 2020 while we debate the merits of abandoning alleys or charging home owners a much higher percentage of the cost.

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