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Office of Mayor
Christopher M. Taylor

April 5, 2019

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CITY OF ANN ARBOR

Dear Clerk Beaudry,

SUMMARY

City Council chose in September 2017 to be upfront and transparent. We made a pledge to the voters who would go to the polls in November 2017 about how we intended to spend their tax dollars if they would approve the County Mental Health and Public Safety Millage (the “Millage”). Resolution 19-0581, Enactment No: R-19-137 (the “Re-allocation Resolution”) breaks that pledge, and so I hereby exercise my veto.

DISCUSSION

In the presence of an opaque millage proposal, Council chose in September 2017 to pass the 40-40-20 Administrative Policy, a policy to guide how Ann Arbor should spend unallocated public safety rebate monies if the Millage were to pass. The decision made by Council was not legally binding, but it was a pledge to the voters. It was, and remains, a pledge to the voters to use rebate monies to fund community priorities that were then chronically under-funded – 40% (\$880K) for climate action; 40% (\$880K) for affordable housing; and 20% (\$440K) for pedestrian safety. This pledge was the subject of substantial public conversation, two Council votes, numerous articles in the paper, and a variety of email-campaigns delivered to many thousands of Ann Arbor voters.

When the voters passed the Millage in November 2017, they converted the pledge to a promise. I believe, therefore, the 40-40-20 Administrative Policy to be an obligation of honor. I have stated this position on numerous occasions, expressing my commitment to do everything within my authority to maintain our fidelity to that policy. It should come as no surprise to anyone that today I act upon that commitment.

I acknowledge that some disagree with my view of the moral force of the 40-40-20 Administrative Policy. Recently, and in an effort to move on from that disagreement, I proposed and co-sponsored with Councilmember Griswold, Resolution 19-0565, a measure that establishes funding floors for the three priorities established by the 40-40-20 Administrative Policy, but which was agnostic with respect to funding sources. The whole point of this resolution was to leave the 40-40-20 Administrative Policy untouched, agree to disagree, and afford Council the ability to focus on priorities and move on together.

I am glad to say that a majority of Council did indeed come together to support this resolution, expressing our community's desire that we get serious about climate action, affordable housing, and pedestrian safety.

The Re-allocation Resolution, unfortunately, forces the fight I worked hard to avoid.

The Re-allocation Resolution, if implemented, would violate the 40-40-20 Administrative Policy by purposefully re-allocating millage rebate monies to priorities identified in a recent public opinion survey rather than the promised priorities of climate action, affordable housing, and pedestrian safety. A couple of points.

First, we have a representative democracy so as to allow our government to make informed decisions. Survey participants are not bound by the fiduciary duties to which elected representatives are obligated; they do not have the benefit of the voluminous training and information that we receive and internalize; further, they do not participate in the public conversation about priorities – they do not have the benefit of the input of others. Budgeting even a small part of a \$400,000,000 organization by public opinion survey is unwise and unreliable.

Second, although budgeting by survey is unwise, it is worth noting that all dollars directed in the Re-allocation Resolution will actually be in the Administrator's Budget. Put another way, some may say my veto will reduce spending for mental health services, street repairs, safe drinking water initiatives, water/sewer infrastructure improvements, or public safety/police. It will not. Not by one penny.

OK, so if all the dollars in the Re-allocation Resolution will be in the Budget anyway, why exercise the veto? I veto the Re-allocation Resolution because it guts the 40-40-20 Administrative Policy.

40-40-20 was a pledge to voters, issued before they cast their ballots to approve an eight-year tax. By altering the rebate's uses, the Re-allocation Resolution breaks that pledge and renders meaningless the policy's promise of nearly a decade of stable funding for climate action, affordable housing, and pedestrian safety. If we are to make progress in these crucial areas, financial support needs to be consistent and substantial. While I am Mayor, I will do everything that I can to keep that promise and provide that funding.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, I exercise my authority under the City Charter and hereby veto Resolution 19-0581, Enactment No: R-19-137.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Christopher Taylor
Mayor of the City of Ann Arbor