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Milwaukee County First calls for an independent investigation into the O'Donnell Park tragedy

Ever since the tragedy which occurred on June 24, 2010, when a concrete façade fell on three people, killing a teenage boy and seriously injuring a woman, there have been questions regarding the investigation of the incident.

Whenever incidents that could have legal repercussions, such as this incident, occur, it is not uncommon for there to be an independent investigation into the incident, if no other reason than to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. However, Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker inexplicably chose not to take the prudent action of asking for an independent investigation, but instead kept it under the auspices of the County.

Unfortunately, the conflicts of interest don't just end with the possible legal ramifications, but continue on many different levels. The most obvious of these being the possible ramifications on the political races with which the County Executive and the County Sheriff are currently and actively involved.

To further heighten the concern about the way the investigation is being handled is the fact that the County Executive's office has not been forthcoming with documents requested by the media, especially those regarding the histories of inspections and maintenance work done with the structure. Nor has the County Executive's office been keeping the County Board informed of the progress of the investigation into the tragedy.

Due to these conflicts of interest, whether apparent or real, an increasing number of people have expressed concern over the objectivity of the investigation and whether the results of it will be valid and reliable. This outcry grew louder after Scott Walker announced the cause to be related to how the structure was constructed, without offering any proof to support this statement or disproving other causes.

In response to this growing concern, Milwaukee County First has taken the proactive measure of writing to the State of Wisconsin's Division of State Facilities asking them to do an independent investigation into the cause or causes of the façade to fall (see attached). The citizens and visitors of Milwaukee County deserve to have confidence in the findings of an *Milwaukee County First is a registered 501(c)4 non-profit organization based in Milwaukee County.*

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investigation and the knowledge that public safety was not only the major focus of such an investigation, but was the only focus.

Letter to David Helbach, Administrator, Division of State Facilities:

August 2, 2010

David Helbach

Administrator, Division of State Facilities

Department of Administration

101 E. Wilson St.

Madison, WI 53703

RE: O'Donnell Park, Milwaukee, WI

Dear Mr. Helbach,

As I am sure you are aware, on June 24, 2010, a 27,000 pound concrete façade fell off of the O'Donnell Park parking structure in Milwaukee County. The façade struck three people, killing a teenage boy and seriously injuring a woman.

Despite the appearance of many conflicts of interest on many different levels, Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker chose to keep the investigation under the auspices of Milwaukee County. This decision does not follow standard protocol in these types of situations by failing to have an independent agency do the investigation. The County Executive's office has also failed to release requested documents regarding the history of the parking structure to the media, as well as not been keeping the public or even the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors informed of all the information [regarding the investigation](#).

Many people, from Milwaukee County citizens to [the majority of the Milwaukee County Board](#), have expressed concern over the objectivity of this investigation and whether the results of the *Milwaukee County First* is a registered 501(c)4 non-profit organization based in Milwaukee County.

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investigation would be honest, reliable and accurate. These concerns were heightened over the past weekend when the County Executive declared the cause of the façade falling was the [installation](#), even though the investigation is still ongoing. The County Executive made this statement without proof supporting it, or disproving other possibilities.

Due to the immediate concerns regarding public safety and the obvious conflict of interests that the County Executive has in the outcomes of this investigation, I, on behalf of the members and supporters of Milwaukee County First, and all of the other concerned citizens of Milwaukee County, respectfully request that the Department of Administration – Division of State Facilities perform an independent investigation into the cause of this horrific incident, and whether there are other safety concerns of which the public should be aware.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation in this serious matter.

Sincerely,

Chris Liebenthal

Chair, Milwaukee County First

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