



## CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Mayor Melvin Carter

390 City Hall  
15 West Kellogg Boulevard  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Telephone: 651-266-8510  
Facsimile: 651-266-8521

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Council President Brendmoen and the Members of the Saint Paul City Council,

Today, despite his expertise and indisputable qualifications for the role, I withdraw my appointment for Matt Slaven to serve on the Saint Paul Port Authority board of directors.

Prior to leaving on vacation, Council Member Noecker expressed surprise that I would replace “a black man who was stepping off the board with a white man” while wondering aloud how I could have come to my decision. Minimizing former Deputy Mayor and Project for Pride in Living President Paul William’s role on the Port Authority board as “a black man” is an insult to his distinguished career in community development and his nationally respected development expertise.

Clearly stated: my intent is to replace a development expert who has experience working within city government, with a leader in development with similar experience and expertise.

Mr. Slaven is uniquely and distinctly qualified to represent the City of Saint Paul’s interests on the Saint Paul Port Authority Board. Prior to his current role as Partner at Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP, Matt served as an interim assistant city attorney with the Saint Paul City Attorney’s Office. He served as the city’s lead representative for the redevelopment of the Ford site in the City’s Highland Park neighborhood. This 122-acre endeavor is among the largest urban in-fill projects in the United States and one of the largest public-private partnership projects in Minnesota, including \$92 million in public infrastructure investment and a projected total project value of more than \$1 billion. In the course of his work, he spent many hours strategizing how to achieve the City of Saint Paul’s goals and priorities in the redevelopment agreement with me, Council Member and Housing and Redevelopment Authority Chair Tolbert, as well as with members of our community.

Previously, Mr. Slaven represented the Minnesota Vikings in connection with the design, development, construction and operation of US Bank Stadium - the largest public-private project ever completed in Minnesota. He has also been involved in the transformative public-private redevelopment of several blocks of land surrounding the stadium. He also represented the Minnesota Children’s Museum with the 2016-17 renovation and reconfiguration of its iconic Downtown Saint Paul location. He is a Saint Paul resident who has taken time in his career to serve our City. The words and actions of some members of this council are an insult to his expertise and dedication and send an unwelcoming signal to all who would desire to serve but may not meet the requirements of arbitrary litmus tests.

Over the course of my administration, we have systematically invited residents from every neighborhood into the conversation; a commitment which is readily reflected in our Cabinet and Administration hiring, our city workforce, and our appointments to task forces, boards, and commissions.

Our goal has been to tell every Saint Paul resident that their contributions are valuable, and to encourage each one in efforts to grow their leadership to lift up our community. Sadly, over the past few weeks, the public statements of a few City Council Members have communicated the opposite.

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Despite the efforts of certain Council Members to keep the focus simply on this one appointment, our administration's track record speaks for itself. Over the period this debate has spanned, all seven of my new appointees across five different boards approved by this council on the consent agenda have been people of color. Three of these seven appointees are women. To cite this one appointment, in isolation, as evidence of a lack of commitment to diversifying our city's boards and commissions is willfully deceptive.

Our vision for building a city that works for all of us isn't about rejecting the contributions of some in favor of others. It's about truly bringing all the voices in our city to the table. I believe - *and we have proven* - that if we sincerely look citywide for talented people who love and want to help lift our community, we can and will elevate a diverse set of leaders who reflect our community's diversity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Carter' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Melvin Carter  
Mayor