

Joseph Cardamone

From: Cameron Swallow <cameron.swallow@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 10:20 AM
To: CountyBoard
Subject: Please don't approve polarizing figures to positions of public trust

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Dear County Board Supervisors,

I am writing to ask you please not to approve the appointment of Kevin Mathewson to a position of public trust. From where I stand, there is no more polarizing figure you could choose.

Kevin Mathewson's name has become inextricably entwined with vigilante justice and overt racism. Choosing him in any public way will associate your name and your office with both of those things, unavoidably. Even if you, in your own heart, would choose him for other motives, it is not possible to avoid his negative associations with the violence of 2020 and the persecution of other Kenosha citizens (primarily Black citizens) since then. My mother finally convinced my father, back in the mid-1980s, that even though his personal reasons for flying the Confederate flag might be pure and noble, at some point that flag's meaning in the wider society became more powerful than his personal, internal symbolism. It seems to me that putting Kevin Mathewson in a position of public trust is akin to flying the Confederate flag in a public office building. You cannot control what the message of that appointment will be--people will not read it in any other way than official support for vigilante justice and racism.

As a leader of the depolarization no-profit [Braver Angels](#), I spend a lot of my time and energy looking for ways to establish common ground between liberals and conservatives for the public good, for a shared future. I am able and willing to look for common ground in Kenosha. But Kevin Mathewson is so polarized as to be a deal-breaker for anyone on the left, as polarizing a message as appointing a late-term-abortion doctor to a position of public trust would be on the other side.

I am distressed by County Executive Kerkman's choices for the REEC positions as well--I believe anyone associated with the Kyle Rittenhouse trial should be out of the question for such an appointment, and I don't understand why a minority voice who trades on his opposition to listening to minority voices should be sought out for a position on an equity committee.

But Kevin Mathewson, oh my goodness--appointing him will feel like a clear signal that you are not interested in working across the political divide in any way, even for local issues that can be solved by local people of good will. Please don't make that clear statement of uncompromising polarization.

In hope for finding and building common ground,
Cameron Swallow
Co-coordinator for Braver Angels in Wisconsin