

Poem as Agenda

for the Common Council of Madison, WI, Tuesday, October 17, 2017

by Dana Maya

Petition:
a formal request to a higher authority or deity,
entreaty

Early 14th century: *a supplication or prayer*

from Latin *petitionem*
to blow, thrust, attack, assail
Seek, strive after, ask for,
Beg, beseech, request
Fetch, derive, demand, require,

From *pete- *to rush, to fly*
from Sanskrit *pattram-*
Wing, feather, leaf
from Greek - *piptein-to fall,*
potamos- rushing water, pteryx-wing
Old English *feðer- feather*
Old Welsh *eterin-*
Bird

I know that in the halls of law
We should not *seek* or *ask* for deities,
but the words assemble
for their own meetings—
construct their own Agendas
& issue their own Petitions
assail us when we fail
they *fetch*
the proclamations we throw
like sticks
& return them to us on
Rushing waters,
feathered wings

Tonight, the meeting minutes will make a
record

& somewhere outside the halls
will issue *a formal request to a higher authority*
to which there will be no hyperlink—

Only in your body's secret record
are petitions *supplication, prayer*
are *fall of leaf, lift of wing*

Tonight's minutes will list
housing, the cemetery,
the sidewalk, the Gas & Electric,
the landlords & landmarks,
the demolition & erosion—

& something unspoken will *request*
Require, demand
its own transcription:

the unmarked record

will read:
our home, our dead, our path walked forward
our heat & light,
our place of worship

our breakage & our earth—
& all the ways quietly,
almost unseen,
the earth, under pressure,

gives way.