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**ROBERT G. DONOVAN**  
Alderman, 8th District

# Statement on hearing regarding MPD crime statistics

**Alderman Bob Donovan**  
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To his credit, Chief Flynn put together an impressive presentation yesterday. The police department apparently reviewed more than 34,000 crime reports. But I can't ignore the fact that the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* is only asking for 800 reports. If \$10,000 is indeed the only stumbling block to releasing these reports, I can only scratch my head, assuming that it must have cost the department three or four times that amount to put together their audit which was presented yesterday.

There are several issues I feel compelled to comment on about yesterday's hearing, not the least of which is the fact that the Chief stated that the department misreported more than 5,000 reports. However, there were things said and unsaid yesterday that concern me.

First, I was somewhat taken aback by the negative comments directed toward the *Journal Sentinel* by some of my colleagues. I find myself in somewhat uncharted waters defending the *Journal Sentinel*, but what's right is right. I shouldn't have to point out that had it not been for the *Journal Sentinel's* investigation, we would not have been sitting there yesterday in the first place discussing admitted failures, errors, and shortcomings of our crime reporting procedures. On the other hand, the *Journal Sentinel* has been criticized for not doing a thorough enough investigation – yet the only way that can be accomplished is by gaining access to the very information they've been denied.

Because we seem to be up to our necks in the discussion of audits – from the police department to the Fire and Police Commission to the Comptroller to the FBI – please allow me to comment first on the FBI audit. Until very recently, I was not aware of this audit, and quite frankly I am having difficulty finding anyone who was aware of it. It seems to have been Milwaukee's best kept secret. Yet in the Chief's own testimony he requested it almost two years ago. Yet to the best of my knowledge, no public mention of concerns (which must have existed) regarding the validity of crime reports (which led to the audit request) was ever brought forward. In my mind, there are still questions that remain as to the scope and intensity of this audit. Since it's been described as a periodic audit encompassing more than several jurisdictions, one can easily assume it is of a more cursory nature.

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Thirdly, there was a brief discussion yesterday relating to comments and calls certain Council members have received from officers concerned about crime statistics and the validity of those statistics. Why officers call some Council members (and not others) regarding these issues, I simply cannot explain. But I have received them, Alderman Dudzik has received them, and Alderman Bohl has received them (and perhaps other colleagues as well). Should we simply ignore these calls and comments? Not I!

I agree with my colleagues when they say those officers have an obligation to come forward. In a perfect world they would, but we don't live in a perfect world. Whistle blowing requires a special kind of courage: a willingness to put everything on the line with no guarantees. This is hard enough in the private sector, but I suspect this is even more pronounced in a paramilitary organization like MPD, where there's a code of conduct, a chain of command, and absolute authority. Most people aren't willing to place their families and careers in jeopardy. Most people go along to get along. Most people are simply unwilling to challenge authority. I'm pretty sure I could name several elected officials who fit that bill.

And finally, I will say this publicly once again (as I have said to the Chief in person in the past): the reduction in crime in the City of Milwaukee is not necessarily matching up to what I see and hear on the streets.

The purpose of yesterday's hearing was to discuss crime statistics. Much of that revolved around our computer system, yet there are other ways of impacting crime statistics. Let's admit it: this administration and this police department have been under tremendous pressure over the years to reduce crime. How certain people within those entities respond to that pressure may vary. If a crime is committed and the police don't respond and don't write a report, statistically that crime never occurred. Make it difficult for people to report crimes, report a series of crimes as one incident, under-value property lost in a crime so it is not a felony -- these less-than-honest practices have gone on in other cities, so why not in Milwaukee? Are they going on in Milwaukee? I don't know, but that's why three things need to occur:

- The *Journal Sentinel* needs to continue its investigation to find the truth.
- The police department needs to release the reports the *Journal Sentinel* is requesting.
- A full and complete outside audit of the MPD's crime reporting practices and procedures must take place as soon as possible.