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Alderman, 8th District

Barrett's 100 cops just won't cut it

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan September 30, 2013

Before the citizens of Milwaukee get too cozy with the mayor's 2014 budget proposal to add 100 new police officers, they should know our true, current reality.

The reality today is:

- The Milwaukee Police Department has 155 vacant police officer positions, and there are an additional 166 vacant civilian positions that are often filled by sworn personnel (sworn personnel who could also be deployed to fight crime on our streets). Back in the 2010 city budget, 100 positions were eliminated (full-time approved sworn positions), so in my opinion the city has approximately 260 vacant police officer positions! The additional 100 officers the mayor is proposing should have been added and planned for anyway, because we need them badly on our streets as soon as possible.
- During the next few years, hundreds of Milwaukee police officers will become eligible to retire. The fact is we have not been keeping pace with bringing on new officers, and we've dug ourselves a hole that will keep us from keeping up with these retirements. I fear it will take some time for us to dig ourselves out of this hole.
- We had at least three more shootings over the weekend, and a George Webb's restaurant on the near south side that I frequent was hit by two armed robberies in one week. It is amazing that no one was seriously hurt. In addition, it has come to my attention that there were several other serious incidents – including a double shooting and a stabbing where several people were involved – over the weekend that did not make the news. So believe me, it is possible that we are not hearing about all of the serious crimes and incidents that are taking place.
- We continue to see more of a “spread” of crime into neighborhoods where just a few short years ago incidents would rarely, if ever, occur (this is the case in MPD's 6th District, which covers a huge portion of the city's south side and, in my view, has been grossly understaffed by officers for years). Criminals are not complete idiots, and they will do their business in areas where they will expect to see the least resistance. So, this means many neighborhoods are suffering the consequences of the mayor's short-sighted approach to police staffing.

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- The “Broken Windows” approach to policing and crime prevention, which comes from George Kelling and is instilled in Chief Flynn, very simply cannot be employed and will not work if it is not supported with the necessary resources for success. Adding hundreds of additional officers would go a long way to giving Chief Flynn and the department the additional support needed to maximize “Broken Windows” policing in Milwaukee.

Quite frankly, I believe people need to wake up in Milwaukee and see what our current reality truly is. If they see that reality they should also see that adding 100 new police officers is nowhere near enough.