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Alderman, 8th District

Alderman Donovan calls for hiring 300-400 new police officers; points to New York City's example

Statement of Alderman Bob Donovan March 11, 2013

Once again there's been another homicide on Milwaukee's near south side (over the weekend a man was killed near S. 5th and W. Maple Streets). Unfortunately, the "slow motion carnage" that Chief Ed Flynn has referred to continues on our streets.

I believe it is time in Milwaukee to do what was done in New York City: Hire additional police officers and get them out and patrolling our streets.

In New York City, it all started under Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Police Commissioner Bill Bratton. They were on the same page and began the process that would eventually add 14,000 police officers to the city. During a recent meeting of the Public Safety Committee, Chief Flynn commented on the remarkable turnaround those additional resources brought to fighting crime in New York City: "During that period of time they were able to focus those additional resources in the neighborhoods that were the most at risk and make a profound impact."

Chief Flynn said the increase in new officers – coupled with good overall management and intelligence-driven policing – paid off as a good investment for New York City, as crime has plummeted by more than 75%, almost twice as much as in the rest of the U.S., according to the *New York Times*.

Very simply, New York City today is considered the safest big city in America.

During this same time period in New York City, the number of its residents in prison has shrunk (also according to the NYT). The city's incarceration rate, once quite high by national standards, has fallen well below the U.S. average and has hit another new low. So, crime in New York City has been greatly reduced by adding new officers, and that has not meant putting more New Yorkers behind bars (if this could also happen here in Milwaukee, I believe our city would be stronger and healthier).

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When Mr. Bratton took the chief's job in Los Angeles, the LAPD force went from 6,000 officers to more than 9,000, according to Chief Flynn. Under Bratton's leadership (including intelligence-driven policing and good community engagement), crime in Los Angeles has also plummeted.

Chief Flynn has all of the skills, talent and smarts to get the job done here, but it is up to city leaders to get him the resources that he needs! Mayor Barrett keeps saying "we can't afford new officers;" I say we can't afford NOT to add additional officers!

At the height of police officer strength in New York City, there was one cop for every 190 residents. In Milwaukee, we have one cop for every 350 residents.

Unfortunately, I do not believe Milwaukee will see significant economic investment in places such as the 30th Street Corridor until we get our act together controlling crime and violence. We very well may have a higher level of dysfunction here that is fueling all manner of different crimes, but that just means we need to focus greater police resources in those areas that are affected (just like in NYC). In short, there are no shortcuts to solving our problems, and we must find a way to get it done.

At the end of the day, Milwaukee needs to replicate what was accomplished in New York City. We need for Milwaukee to once and for all live up to its potential and become the shining jewel of the Midwest.

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