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Where's the Outrage? Wake Up Milwaukee!

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
July 29, 2013

While some may argue that we should aspire to emulate Chicago in certain ways, violence shouldn't be one of them. We certainly had a red letter weekend in Milwaukee – 12 shootings and still counting. **Where's the outrage?** Or has violence and dysfunction become the norm in certain neighborhoods?

I for one am not at all satisfied with the level of public safety in Milwaukee and neither should anyone else be. If anyone disagrees with me, all I can say is that we must subscribe to different standards. You see, I remember the Milwaukee that once was and it sickens me to see what we're becoming.

Allow me to elaborate...

July has been a rather challenging month beginning with a very violent 4th of July weekend. We then had numerous shootings throughout the month resulting in several deaths. It's actually become difficult to keep track of it all because one shooting seems to roll into the next.

Two weeks ago we had an out of control mob brawling in the middle of the day, resulting in a 17-year-old being shot. We also had several vicious home invasions on the south side culminating in robbery and rape, in addition to all the violence and heartbreak that this last weekend brought. Couple all of this with a completely out of control drug trade in Milwaukee, an increasing number of Milwaukee's youth having little or no regard or respect for the police, ongoing human trafficking and rampant prostitution, street robberies and vandalism, and you end up with a crime rate, per capita, that is higher than New York City and Los Angeles!

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The current number of police officers is so low that if you call 911 you can end up waiting hours for a squad (and this is for serious crimes like your house being burglarized, not for a cat up a tree). What's worse is that there is no plan whatsoever for filling our ever increasing police vacancies. No plan – period. This administration seems more interested in crime stats than in the big picture. I could go on and on.

None of what I have stated should be considered as an indictment of our hardworking men and women of the Milwaukee Police Department. Given all the challenges they face, they are doing the best they can with limited resources.

While Milwaukee faces many challenges, restoring public safety has got to be priority one, for without it, nothing else positive can occur.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that lives are being snuffed out here and all too often it's the lives of young people (some of our victims have barely reached puberty!). Families are left devastated and residents are left in fear.

Has this kind of violence and loss become so commonplace that it has somehow become perversely acceptable? Have our standards really declined to such an extent? Where's the outrage?

All I could do is shake my head Sunday morning after watching the news and seeing the response of the mayor and Chief Flynn to this weekend's devastating violence. They held a press conference and a street roll call. Does anyone really believe that these ever increasing stale roll call media shows accomplish anything? These displays do nothing more than allow the mayor and the Chief an opportunity to create the false impression that progress is being made. Two days later the neighborhood is back to business as usual.

During the press conference the Chief urged citizens to call the police when they see "trouble brewing." The reality is that those folks have already been calling but all too often their concerns are met with a less than stellar response on the other end of the line. Citizens are often given the third degree, and after all that they are told that there are no squads available or their issue doesn't sound that serious and they should call back if things escalate. Two or three responses like that and it's easy to see why people get discouraged and stop calling.

During this press conference the mayor also urged parents and kids to comply with the curfew ordinances. While discussing curfew may be laudable, our problems go way beyond that Mr. Mayor. The reality is that we're not living in Mayberry and we're not talking about Wally and the Beaver misbehaving here. What we are talking about is drug dealers, gang bangers and thugs controlling some of our Milwaukee neighborhoods. We're talking about decent, law-abiding citizens (many of whom are seniors) who have become prisoners in their own homes. None venture out at night and some not even during the day.

What we have now is a Milwaukee Police Department that is overworked and understaffed and when faced with all these current challenges, simply can't keep up (which has resulted in morale landing in the gutter). What is being done about these issues? Please Mr. Mayor, tell me that Milwaukee isn't pinning all its hope on curfew compliance. **Where is the outrage?**

Now I realize that many community groups and elected officials including the mayor are engaged in any number of worthwhile efforts. Youth diversion programs, mentoring efforts, the fatherhood initiative and cease fire Sabbaths are all well and good, but they are simply not enough and not necessarily the role of local government. Enforce the law and apprehend and punish the law breakers and keep our neighborhoods safe.

Other cities have faced the same challenges head on. They created the coalitions and partnerships needed to secure the resources necessary to confront these public safety issues and they've made the difficult decisions. They also had what Milwaukee seems to be lacking in – strong leadership. I point once again to New York City and the New York miracle. Why not Milwaukee? I say again, why not Milwaukee?

Yet sadly, over the years, Milwaukee has been saddled with far too many civic leaders both in government and in the private sector who have displayed little more than indifference and timidity in dealing with this most serious issue. **Where is the outrage?**

While our public officials can find the time and resources to move forward with a downtown streetcar or can debate building a new arena or the development of a plan for the future of the Art Museum and War Memorial, they seem utterly paralyzed when it comes to addressing the most serious issue facing our city – the violence that is both figuratively and literally killing Milwaukee.

We all should be outraged! Wake up Milwaukee, the clock is ticking.