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August 5, 2009

Ald. Tony Zielinski
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Massive Graffiti Tag Moves Up News Conference

Marquette Interchange Incident Spurs News Event at 2:30 Today

The massive graffiti tag sprayed on a Marquette Interchange wall has pushed Common Council members and other officials to move up a planned news conference to 2:30 p.m. today (Wednesday, August 5).

During the news conference – set for **2:30 p.m. at S. 15th St. and W. St. Paul Ave.** – Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee chair **Alderman Tony Zielinski**, vice chair **Alderman Terry Witkowski**, and member **Alderman Bob Donovan** will be joined by **Dennis Shook**, a state Department of Transportation official, a representative of the city Dept. of Neighborhood Services (DNS) and by citizens who are active in removing graffiti from their neighborhoods.

Alderman Zielinski said the freeway graffiti incident is indicative of a recent “ramping up” of graffiti activity that all Milwaukeeans must fight against. “We are fighting a battle that requires ‘all hands on deck,’ and part of what we’ll be talking about today is the importance of citizens and neighbors getting involved and lending extra hands in the battle against graffiti,” said Alderman Zielinski.

Alderman Witkowski said many taggers start their “careers” with markers on poles, garbage cans and boxes and then escalate to bridges and buildings. “What most taggers fail to see is that graffiti kills jobs, it kills neighborhood stability, and it attracts new criminal activity,” he said. “It’s an enormous waste of money and resources at a time when people and communities are struggling mightily with other challenges.”

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Anti-Graffiti News Conference/ADD ONE

DNS Commissioner **Art Dahlberg** indicated that observant neighbors and bystanders have also helped police catch graffiti taggers and solve long-running vandalism sprees. “It’s just a fact that the extra eyes watching in our neighborhoods increase the chances of catching the criminals and disrupting their activity,” he said.

DNS has anti-graffiti inspectors who assist groups interested in removing graffiti, and DNS takes reports of graffiti and also alerts owners when their property is hit with graffiti. If need be, DNS can issue orders to remove it.

One key to fighting graffiti is time, and experts strongly suggest removing it within 24 hours or less. “Nothing breaks the heart of a tagger more than when they return and find their precious markings are gone,” said Alderman Donovan. “It sends a message that the neighbors are watching and that increases the risk of their being caught if they return. I strongly urge all city residents and property owners to remove graffiti in less than 24 hours because it significantly reduces its recurrence.”

Citizens who see vandals doing graffiti are reminded they should call **911**. To report graffiti on property call DNS at the Anti-Graffiti Hotline at **286-8715** or use E-Notify on the City’s web page at www.city.milwaukee.gov

For more information about graffiti removal techniques, go to:
<http://www.city.milwaukee.gov/AntiGraffiti>