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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Bob Donovan
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Alderman Donovan: Mayor's Proposed Budget Doesn't Pass Smell Test

The 2011 city budget address delivered by Mayor Tom Barrett on Thursday at City Hall was missing some critical personnel information about sworn Milwaukee police officers, according to **Alderman Bob Donovan**.

Alderman Donovan, chair of the city's Public Safety Committee, said the Mayor's proposed 2011 budget claim is light on details about sworn police staffing, a key city issue the Common Council typically must wrestle with each year.

"There's not even enough information in the budget on sworn strength of the (police) department to give the Council direction during the run-up to the budget process," Alderman Donovan said. "Why all of the smoke and mirrors and so little straight information?"

"This (lack of details) is very vague and very strange, and for God's sake I certainly hope the Mayor isn't playing political games with the public safety of the citizens of Milwaukee," he said. "Why not just be honest, have some guts, and just tell us how many sworn officers we're going to be able put on the streets and when. Enough of this vague 'full-time-equivalent' position mumbo jumbo. Mayor, please try using straight talk that the average citizen in Milwaukee can understand."

Alderman Donovan said the city's sworn police officer vacancy rate is "staggering," approaching 300 positions that are not filled, and the rate could inch closer to 400 positions by the end of 2011. He said the effects of the officer shortage -- one-officer squads, increased investigatory duties, and long hours -- are overburdening the current ranks of officers and having a negative impact on morale.

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MPD Positions in 2011 Budget/ADD ONE

“I fear this heavy load will mean that more officers will elect to hit the ‘eject button’ and retire when they hit 25 years (of service), and I also fear it will jeopardize the progress we’ve made under the leadership of Chief Flynn,” he said.

Current sworn strength is also significantly reduced by duty disability, pregnancies, and other factors, including newer probationary officers who limit patrol “reach” because they are always paired up with a field training officer and cannot patrol by themselves.

It is almost a certainty, Alderman Donovan said, that he will have budget amendments to add actual new officer recruits for 2011. “You can deposit that check in the bank,” he said.

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