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ROBERT G. DONOVAN

Alderman, 8th District

Hiring Laid-Off Sheriff's Deputies Could be a Win-Win Option for City

**Statement of Alderman Robert G. Donovan
October 24, 2011**

In a letter, I have asked Police Chief Edward Flynn to strongly consider hiring laid-off Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department deputies as police officers if County Executive Abele's proposed 2012 Milwaukee County budget ends up being approved as it is written. Under Mr. Abele's proposal, the Sheriff's Department budget would be cut by \$14 million, with possible layoffs of 244 Sheriff's Department employees, including 119 sheriff's deputies.

I believe these layoffs, which would put dozens of professionally trained law enforcement personnel in the local job market, represent a valuable opportunity for the Milwaukee Police Department and the City of Milwaukee as a whole. Currently, MPD has approximately 180 vacancies among its sworn positions. When the 100 authorized police officer positions that were eliminated by the 2010 city budget are included, the current number of filled sworn positions is more than 280 positions UNDER the authorized strength of just a few years ago.

The city needs to fill these officer vacancies, and this would be a prime opportunity to do so. Just consider:

- Sheriff's deputies already have extensive law enforcement training. Rather than going through the full six-month new-recruit training program at the Safety Academy, these new hires could be given an orientation to the MPD, its operating procedures and City of Milwaukee ordinances in two or three weeks' time. As a result, the newly-hired officers would be on the street much quicker than new hires without law enforcement backgrounds.
- The shorter training period for the new hires would mean lower training costs for the department and the city. There would also be savings realized, both monetarily and in terms of police service specialist investigator (PSSI) time, from not having to conduct the same extensive background checks on these law enforcement officers that are necessary for new hires without law enforcement backgrounds.

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- Fewer MPD vacancies will mean shorter response times. While I've been a big supporter of MPD's practice of differential policing, because of the shortage of police officers, response times are not where I would like them. Milwaukee residents have an expectation of timely responses to their calls for service; by filling MPD vacancies with laid-off sheriff's deputies, we can help alleviate concerns about slow police response times.

In my view, hiring some laid-off sheriff's deputies – should they be let go by the county – is an opportunity too good to pass up. Even if MPD hires only 20 to 40 laid-off deputies, the department could benefit from substantial savings in terms of training costs, while a larger police force would make a huge difference in the quality of life in many challenged Milwaukee neighborhoods.

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