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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Terry Witkowski
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Study to Look at MFD Downsizing, Possible Cost Saving Options

Alderman Witkowski says severity of state budget impact on city means "all options need to be on the table"

****News conference at City Hall at 11:15 a.m. TODAY****

"If 80% of all calls for fire department response are for Emergency Medical Services, and if the city is already serviced by four ambulance companies with trained EMTs and each with a section of the city, what if ambulance companies responded to all emergency medical calls and not a fire truck?" **Alderman Terry Witkowski** asked this morning.

Alderman Witkowski will host a **news conference today at 11:15 a.m. in the third floor Common Council Chamber anteroom at City Hall** (200 E. Wells St.) to discuss the issue.

"And, if of the remaining 20% of the calls for fire service, an average of only 36 fires are working structure fires, and if the city operates 36 fire stations, with 61 fire companies and has 232 on-duty firefighters every second of the day, with 80% of the workload (emergency medical calls) removed, what if the city re-evaluated fire service and response?"

The governor has drafted a budget that reduces shared revenue and in his words, gives us the tools to make cuts in pension costs and health care, the alderman said. "He exempts 65% of Milwaukee's employee costs from these cuts by exempting police and fire personnel, the most costly groups. The City Attorney questions the legality of pension cuts, one of the cost savers that are proposed by the governor," he said.

-More-

Fire Service Study News Conference/ADD ONE

The question arises whether Milwaukee will need to close libraries, cut health services and other vital sanitation services to stay within the tax level cap proposed for the city.

Milwaukee and other municipalities are charged then with finding a new way to do business and deliver services to the public and do more with less again!

Alderman Witkowski said: “Given these circumstances, I am asking for a study of the fire service in Milwaukee. I have made a request to the city legislative reference bureau to seek information nationally that can help recreate fire service in Milwaukee that may be able to provide the same service at a lower cost to taxpayers. I’d further request study by the budget office for consideration of adoption of a new fire service system in the Mayor’s 2012 budget.”

According to Alderman Witkowski, relevant facts to consider include:

- 80% of fire calls are emergency medical related responses
- The city is already divided into four parts and served by ambulance companies with trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)
- In many cases, the private ambulances are waiting up the street when the fire truck gets to an emergency medical call

Are there other cities that do it differently? Can Milwaukee’s ambulance companies be contracted to eliminate the fire truck response and perform the work with city oversight thereby eliminating 80% of the fire department’s calls for service?

Can the remaining 20% of the calls, the majority of which are not fire calls, be handled by contract service with city oversight? Do you need 36 stations, and 61 Companies and 232 firefighters on duty 24 hours a day for the relatively few fires that occur in Milwaukee? Could Milwaukee contract with a national firm to provide local fire service? Could Milwaukee contract with suburban departments to provide fire service at a lower cost? Could it contract with the county? All contracts would need city oversight. Could the fire service be a mix of the above and include a portion of the existing fire service in areas not contracted for and served by others?

By revising how we provide fire service, we may be able to lower rising taxpayer costs for health care and pension not included in the controls put forward by the governor’s budget and deal with the cuts in revenue that the governor proposes.

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Fire Service Study News Conference/ADD TWO

“It makes no sense to me to gut all other city services and not also examine public safety agencies. With the budget cuts being given to Milwaukee without adequate tools to deal with it, everything needs to be on the table,” he said.

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