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We need a real public safety strategy, not another street roll call

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan August 14, 2012

In case you might have missed it on the news, early this morning there was a triple shooting at S. 23rd and W. Orchard Streets in my district on the near south side. At least one child was among the victims, and I pray that the injured heal and that no one dies from their wounds.

It's my understanding that the Milwaukee Police Department will hold a roll call in the street at the intersection this afternoon. While I'm greatly appreciative of this response, I call them like I see them, and this roll call is all for show.

The department will be pulling cops from all over the city to be at this roll call, meaning neighborhoods will be less protected than they should be. But within a few days those officers will be gone, and it's unclear what, then, will happen at this troubled location.

To provide some history about this situation, we must go back to late July, when there was a shooting at 2301 W. Orchard St. that resulted in a homicide. After that homicide, I had a meeting (August 6) involving Milwaukee County DA John Chisholm, members of the Community Prosecution Unit, MPD Capt. Rebecca Pixley of District Two, as well as others, to discuss the situation. It was decided that steps would be taken to keep an eye on the residence (including using the MPD's Rhino remote surveillance vehicle – which was funded by my Operation Impact) but that nothing much else could be done.

And lo and behold, this morning we have a triple shooting at this same location!

The level of public safety in Milwaukee is far below the standard that is acceptable to me, and if it is acceptable to Chief Flynn and the mayor, then we clearly subscribe to different standards. Taking officers from neighborhoods – and leaving good, law-abiding citizens in peril – to have a street roll call for show, is not going to address our public safety problems.

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I have found it necessary to reach out to the private sector and others for resources to get additional bicycle and foot patrol officers on the streets, and to get other helpful crime-fighting tools such as surveillance cameras. That should not have to occur!

I have been clamoring for increased public safety in Milwaukee for years – largely alone. Too many other public officials have stood in silence or have kept problems under wraps, and have come up with zero plans to address our public safety challenges.

The fatal shooting rampage at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin was indeed a tragedy, but what about the carnage on our streets which seems to take the same number of lives over the course of four or five weeks during our warmer months? Where is the outrage over those shootings and homicides?

Last, my thoughts are with those families and children in Milwaukee's more challenged neighborhoods who will be left to fend for themselves this afternoon (and perhaps for a day or two) because officers are being shifted to the near south side near 23rd and Orchard. What did they do to deserve a diminished public safety presence in their neighborhood?

We need to fill the MPD officer vacancies and create a real public safety strategy for Milwaukee.

Mr. Mayor – I'm calling on you to do just that.