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ROBERT G. DONOVAN

Alderman, 8th District

While Milwaukee Slept

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan

May 7, 2014

If after reading this you get the impression I'm frustrated, you'd be right because I am. You see, I'm on the inside and I see and hear things the average citizen simply doesn't and believe me when I tell you it's not pretty. Allow me to count the ways. Oh, by the way, if this statement seems long it's only because I have a great deal to vent. Keep in mind, the weather hasn't even turned hot yet.

Early Sunday May 4th (which happened to be my 58th birthday), I received a call from a concerned citizen near 31st and Lincoln. Apparently at approximately 1:10 a.m. that morning, some gang banging idiots shot up a car that was full of people outside a tavern at that location. Amazingly, I was told that no one was injured.

Since our shooting incidents in Milwaukee are through the roof, I shudder to think what our homicide rate would be if those same idiots had better aim. Needless to say, I spent the better part of my birthday mending fences with concerned citizens along Lincoln Ave.

Monday didn't prove to be much better (that day, May 5th, ironically was my wife's birthday). About 1 p.m. I was advised of a homicide near 32nd and National. Later that afternoon I received a call from a block watch captain – apparently the homicide occurred at a “known drug house” reported by myself to the police just about a year ago.

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About 9 a.m. that morning in a meeting with my legislative assistant, I was informed about some type of police action near 23rd and National the night before the homicide. We subsequently received information from the police that the incident on 23rd and National was probably related to an incident that occurred at a tavern near 10th and Mitchell. As it turns out, it wasn't related. Just another individual stabbed.

But this is what apparently occurred on 10th and Mitchell: It seems that another idiot (sadly there is no shortage of idiots these days) entered a crowded bar with a shotgun and decided to pump off a few rounds. Only through the grace of God I'm told that no one was injured.

I failed to point out that the weekend really began Friday morning May 2nd with a meeting with Police and other City officials regarding the serious prostitution problem plaguing Police District 2 and, consequently, a significant portion of my Aldermanic District. Of course I've only been screaming about this issue for years.

But apparently, despite my best efforts, the MPD is telling me my District is the epicenter of prostitution City-wide. They admit again something I've been saying for years, that the prostitution problem can be linked to other crimes, including homicide.

I would like to thank Captain Morales, the commanding officer of District 2 -- and his staff -- for finally, finally, finally getting what I and others have been saying for years. At this point, all I can say is better late than never. With all this in mind, I hate to imagine the ongoing dysfunction and the often muffled outcry of the citizens living in Districts far more distressed than my own.

Oh -- by the way, did I mention the longtime resident who approached me about his skyrocketing insurance rates? He was told by his carrier that it's because he lives in a bad neighborhood. Ironically, he happens to live in one of the nicer neighborhoods in my District.

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Then this elderly woman, whose tax assessment has taken another tumble, tells me that the value of her home is fast approaching what she and her husband paid for the house more than 40 years ago.

Oh – I almost forgot to mention the longtime popular bar and restaurant in my District. It’s a beautiful brick building, two apartments upstairs and a four-car garage. It sold for the astounding price of \$67,000. The City’s last assessment was \$278,000. Again – if I sound frustrated it’s only because I am.

I began this statement by saying I’m on the inside and I see and hear a lot more than the average citizen. Citizens, business owners and cops from across Milwaukee contact me on a regular basis about their concerns. Why they turn to me I don’t know. Perhaps it’s because over the years I’ve developed a reputation for telling it like it is. So, in that vein, I’ll say it again, once more and for the record: The City of Milwaukee Police Department is grossly understaffed.

Despite the 120 officers scheduled to be hired this year, it’s not even a drop in the bucket given the vacancy rate and the upcoming retirements. I don’t blame the rank and file officers for the level of crime and disorder this City is facing. They’re doing the best they can with the resources they have.

I blame the Mayor and other City fathers (they know who they are) both in and out of Government, for, in a nutshell, failing to lead on this issue. And, sadly, I blame Chief Flynn for not more aggressively fighting for the additional officers he knows (and I know) are so desperately needed. Politics and policing simply do not mix. If the citizens of Milwaukee don’t wake up in a hurry, they may soon not recognize the City they eventually wake up in.

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