



October 31, 2014

Ald. Terry L. Witkowski
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Fire department trucks, 911 calltakers recommended for addition to budget

The Milwaukee Fire Department would add two rapid response trucks to its fleet as a pilot program, and the city would budget for ten auxiliary 911 calltakers to help fill vacancies and reduce call waiting times under budget amendments sponsored by **Alderman Terry L. Witkowski**. Those amendments were recommended for approval today by unanimous votes of the Finance and Personnel Committee, and will now be referred to the full Common Council for approval at its **November 7** budget meeting.

The first amendment would shift \$130,000 in funding from the fire department's energy account to pay for and equip two small rescue trucks. Much smaller than a standard fire rig, these trucks would be used in a pilot program to respond to non-fire calls that still warrant an emergency response.

"Only five percent of the emergency calls to the fire department actually require a fire response, while 80 percent require an EMS response," Alderman Witkowski said. "It makes much more sense to have firefighters respond to those calls in a vehicle that gets 14 miles to the gallon than to have them drive fire rigs that get two miles to the gallon. It will save on the maintenance of those half million dollar rigs and reduce wear and tear."

Another amendment by Alderman Witkowski would create 10 auxiliary 911 calltaker positions. Calltakers hired for the auxiliary positions would receive training for the jobs and then wait to fill any vacancies that occurred, reducing delays.

"Because of turnover, we're in a position where 21 of our 72 calltaker positions are vacant," Alderman Witkowski said. "This has left callers to 911 to wait on hold while their homes burned or violent crimes occurred, and that is simply unacceptable."