

MEMBER

- Public Safety Committee
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ROBERT G. DONOVAN

Alderman, 8th District

Barrett's Chief of Staff misses mark (and has a short memory!)

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan

October 29, 2015

Pat Curley, the Mayor's Chief of Staff (and principal attack dog) told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that my 2016 budget amendment to add 50 additional police officers (by eliminating non-critical MPD management level positions) isn't possible because "*The Common Council does not have the authority, through the adoption of the city budget or the budget of the Milwaukee Police Department, to alter the organizational structure of the Police Department.*"

First, I find it interesting how the administration, in its retort via the newspaper, offers zero defenses for the positions I've slated for elimination. One would think they'd be arguing about how this guy is needed for this role or that thing, but they offer nothing of the kind. That should tell the average citizen, that yes, something is definitely smelling a bit rotten here.

Technically, Curley is correct -- the Common Council cannot dictate the structure of MPD. However, the Council *does* have the direct responsibility to manage the budgetary control for all city operations.

And, in today's environment here -- and across the nation -- with calls from the community for greater police department accountability and oversight (and transparency), are you willing, Mr. Mayor, to state publicly that the Council should not be allowed to suggest police department priorities?

The Council does have the ability to fund the police department, and in order to fund it, we need to make hard decisions. In making those decisions, the Council must decide how many patrol officers we want to fund. This is not unprecedented and our Mayor and his Chief of Staff know this.

In 2012, the Common Council voted to cut the funding for the MPD Public Relations Manager position. By defunding the position, it eliminated a position, thus changing the structure. This is precisely the duty of the Common Council according to state law and city ordinance. State law also makes it clear that the Fire and Police Commission has statutory authority to approve the structure of MPD. Because of decisions ultimately made by the Mayor, the FPC was without an executive director for nearly a year and the newly appointed executive director is only now (finally) in place (just prior to 2016 budget decisions and votes). Safe to say this is a clever political tactic that the Council is well aware of.

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And while Chief Flynn manages an MPD budget of a quarter of a billion dollars with very little oversight (and for a year without an FPC director), my amendment is meant to trim the top heavy department while adding the boots on the street (officers) we so desperately need. As we've seen under Chief Flynn's reign, he places a premium on highly paid bosses and has less of a desire to put more officers on patrol.

My amendment is a request, a framework for how the Council would like to see the funds spent, in an effort to get better value for the citizens we serve. It clearly demonstrates that the city could add 50 patrol officers to the streets simply by eliminating non-essential top-brass positions, many of which are currently vacant, and ones that we simply cannot afford.

Lean times shouldn't just be for citizens -- MPD has grown top heavy, bloated, and needs to take a haircut. While the Council cannot dictate the structure of the Police Department, we can show them a way to put more cops on the beat. If the data-driven chief chooses to maintain his organizational structure after being shown a better, more cost effective method, then he is choosing protectionism over protection and not looking at the data right in front of him.

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