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Milwaukee's public safety crisis increasing fear, frustration of residents

Administration's own policies fueling more crime, violence and mayhem

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan July 28, 2015

In my 15 years of service on the Common Council, I have never seen such a high level of fear and frustration in my constituents and others in the community. The level of violence and disorder, and the lowering quality of life across Milwaukee has people wondering when things will start to improve, if ever.

All of this concerns me immensely, and I've also never seen our city's public safety challenged on so many fronts:

- Vehicle thefts are out of control
- Deadly violence is driving our murder rate to record levels
- Racing, erratic driving, speeding and deadly traffic crashes at very high levels
- An 82-year-old rape victim had to wait three hours for a police response

That last item is shameful – imagine if that was your mother or grandmother?!

And the issue of police response times (or no response) is fueling frustration among citizens and business owners, and many of them are taking matters into their hands, as noted in recent days as vehicle owners have gone after thieves after spotting their stolen vehicles being driven on city streets!

Store owners are frustrated and some have found it necessary to arm themselves, as was so dramatically evidenced in the recent news video showing the owner of Bouchard's on King Drive firing at robbers who were trying to break through his front door! But more frequently, shop owners are getting poor response or no response as kids are running in and stealing items at will. In some cases these store owners are paying \$10,000 or \$12,000 in city property taxes, and they're wondering (with good reason!) why they're not getting the police response they're paying for.

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And the no pursuit policy has clearly backfired, as it is attracting criminals who are coming here to make big money in rolling or mobile drug operations with stolen vehicles. The criminals are becoming increasingly aggressive in their tactics, victimizing citizens – usually at gunpoint – and then driving across the city erratically to the next cocaine and/or heroin sale.

I'm frustrated because residents are turning to me for action and a response, but I'm more frustrated because my concerns and questions directed to Chief Flynn fall on deaf ears. The Chief simply won't respond to my calls and correspondence.

I'm also frustrated because today our police department stands 302 positions short of the authorized strength that it had in 2008 (according to the Legislative Reference Bureau). The administration has simply failed to respond adequately to the officer shortage, despite its annual role of laying out the \$1.5 billion city budget!

You'd think adding additional officers would be a priority, but the administration doesn't see the need.

I have been sounding the alarm for years about our police officer shortage, and now we're seeing glacial response times or no response at all. We're seeing a record number of homicides and officers being furloughed three days a year!

We've created our own perfect storm, haven't we Mr. Mayor?!

It's time to start serving the best interests of our citizens, because right now many of them are simply at the breaking point.