

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



---

FOR INFORMATION CALL

---

November 3, 2015

**Ald. Michael J. Murphy**  
(414) 286-3763  
**Ald. Nik Kovac**  
(414) 286-3765

## **Council approves 2016 budget focused on public safety, libraries and jobs**

The Common Council has approved a **zero property tax levy increase** 2016 city budget focused on public safety, expanded access to libraries and doing more to ensure economic development and job expansion across the city.

The amended budget, adopted today at City Hall by the full Council, funds the hiring of 120 additional police officers and increases funding to expand the successful Safe Zones initiative to combat crime through the use of neighborhood advocates. The Council also restored Friday and weekend hours at six of the city's 12 Milwaukee Public Library branches.

**Alderman Nik Kovac**, chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee, said many city departments – not just the Milwaukee Police Department – are being called upon to bring catalytic, positive change in the area of public safety in this budget.

“This council recognizes the need for a more comprehensive approach to public safety than just putting more cops on the street, and this budget reflects that,” Alderman Kovac said. “Our renewed focus on providing trauma-informed care to the victims of violent crime, organizing communities to stand up for themselves and generating economic opportunities for everyone will help treat the root causes of crime—not just the symptoms.”

**-More-**

## **Council adopts budget/ADD ONE**

Alderman Kovac has restructured the Finance and Personnel Committee's budget hearings to allow for a more efficient process that allows members to debate and deliberate matters in a timely and focused manner. With more concise introductions and write-ups from city staff and departments, the committee is able to craft and vet better budget proposals – something clearly evident this year, he said.

“We can't simply preach efficiency and investing time wisely – we have to live it and own it,” he said.

**Common Council President Michael J. Murphy**, who sponsored a successful amendment to hire 20 additional police officer positions (bringing the total to 120 after counting the 100 police officer positions included in Mayor Tom Barrett's proposed budget), said he was pleased with the overall balance favored by Council members in the 2016 budget.

“We made sure public safety would be addressed, we increased access to our neighborhood libraries, we expanded critical transitional jobs programming, and we created a first-ever position (Heroin and Opiate Victim Advocate) in the police department to help combat the terrible and deadly problem of heroin and opioid addiction and deaths,” President Murphy said.

“Best of all, we were able to put all of this together for Milwaukee residents and taxpayers without increasing city taxes,” he said.

**Alderman José G. Pérez** and **Alderman Robert W. Puente** were co-sponsors on President Murphy's amendment adding the 20 police officers.

The Council approved transferring the Small Business Development Program from the Department of Administration to the City Clerk's Office, and also added funding and position control to create the position of Community Economic Development Director in the City Clerk's Office.

The Council also increased funding to expand its trauma informed care initiative to the Milwaukee Fire Department. The measure will enable MFD – in addition to the MPD – to deploy rapid crisis response teams of trauma informed care specialists to the scenes of violent crimes to provide crucial counseling services to the victims of and witnesses to violent crimes.

**-More-**

## **Council adopts budget/ADD TWO**

The adopted budget holds steady on the tax levy at \$256.7 million, but with the city's tax base expanding again in the wake of the foreclosure crisis, the end result is a slight decline in the tax rate, from \$10.71 to \$10.59 per \$1,000 of assessed value. For the median-valued Milwaukee home of \$104,000, that would equate to a \$13 tax cut to \$1,100 for the year (city taxes).

Council members began the process of tweaking the budget in hearings last month before the Finance and Personnel Committee, and the committee endorsed 14 of the 37 proposals. Most of those were revenue-neutral, making cuts in one department to pay for a proposal elsewhere.

### **With today's budget adoption by the Council:**

- Library branches that were closed on Fridays or Saturdays will be able to reopen on those days, under an amendment approved by the Council.
- An enhanced city Safe Zones initiative (successful amendment sponsored by **Alderman Ashanti Hamilton**) will go forward to continue efforts to help diffuse potentially violent or confrontational situations. Added as co-sponsors: **Alderman Jim Bohl; Alderman Russell W. Stamper, II; Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs; Alderman Joe Davis, Sr. and Alderman Robert W. Puente.**
- The city will add seven Police Community Service Officers (successful amendment sponsored by **Alderman Jim Bohl**) -- non-sworn MPD police officers who attend to lower priority calls for service in the community. The seven PCSOs added in today's budget for 2016 will complement the class of 10 PCSOs approved in the 2015 budget.
- A pilot program allowing residents to purchase city-owned vacant lots where homes used to stand for \$1 will be expanded citywide. A total of \$150,000 will be set aside to provide forgivable loans to people who decided to build on such lots.
- The city now has \$150,000 in an account for establishing community ID (identification) cards (not to be used for voting).

Also included in the budget is a small \$7.58 increase in the fees homeowners pay for services including solid waste, snow and ice control, sewer and storm sewer.