
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

June 2, 2016

Ald. Ashanti Hamilton
(414) 286-2228

Common Council leading the way on multi-pronged public safety effort

Council president and members issue “All Hands Call” for peace

Members of the Milwaukee Common Council today outlined a new, multi-pronged approach to public safety that engages community members, civic leaders and police in combatting the epidemic of violent crime in the city, issuing an “All Hands Call” for a peaceful summer.

“For too long, the mindset has been that there’s an inevitable conflict inherent in the job of rooting out violent crime in Milwaukee,” Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton said. “My colleagues and I stand together today to voice our declaration that there’s another way. We believe we can lead the way to a new approach that engages community members, civic leaders and police officers in stopping the violence.”

President Hamilton was joined at today’s news conference by Public Safety Committee chair **Alderman Bob Donovan**, as well as fellow council members **Milele A. Coggs, Jim Bohl, Tony Zielinski, Mark A. Borkowski, Russell W. Stamper II, José G. Pérez, Cavalier Johnson, Chantia Lewis and Khalif J. Rainey.**

Together, they laid out three important areas of focus for addressing the city’s violent crime: **engaging community members** with a series of anti-violence events and initiatives, **engaging civic leaders** through special Public Safety Committee meetings intended to foster intergovernmental cooperation, and **engaging police officers** by ensuring the Milwaukee Police Department is adequately staffed to weather an upcoming wave of up to 331 retirements that is anticipated over the next 18 months.

-More-

Public Safety/ADD ONE

Engaging community members

Any effort to restore peace in the city's neighborhoods will fall short without the buy-in and investment of residents themselves, President Hamilton said. By tapping into the individual skillsets of his Common Council colleagues, Hamilton said he has laid out a path for individual office-holders to foster that critical engagement.

Alderman Rainey will oversee a partnership with **the Milwaukee Fatherhood Initiative**, the **Milwaukee Police Department Community Prosecution Unit** and the **Department of Neighborhood Services** to initiate a series of night walks in problem areas throughout the city. Residents in those areas will be invited to participate, empowering them to take a stake in their neighborhood's public safety while creating a visible deterrent to crime, and Rainey will leverage the Fatherhood Initiative to recruit 500 fathers and "father-figures" to play a role in engagement efforts.

Alderman Lewis will coordinate an "adopt-a-block" program where local churches will act as their neighborhood's eyes and ears for the police department. A "Safe Summer Kickoff" event is planned for June 17 to further engage residents in fighting crime on their streets.

"This city is full of people who are sick and tired of seeing their neighbors' names in headlines about death and tragedy," President Hamilton said. "They'll do what they can to stop the violence; they're just waiting for someone to invite them to the table and empower them to take action."

Additionally, Hamilton said the council had previously approved several key initiatives to improve conditions in neighborhoods. The President's own "Safe Zones" initiative will staff "neighborhood ambassadors" in the Garden Homes and Franklin Heights areas to mediate conflicts and foster a sense of neighborhood pride. Alderman Coggs sponsored a program that will offer financial aid to nonprofit groups that wish to purchase foreclosed properties to use as community resource centers. And Alderman Stamper is leading an effort to revamp the city's Residents Preference Program to ensure that workers who are hired for qualifying projects come from the city's most distressed neighborhoods, creating pathways to permanent employment.

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Public Safety/ADD TWO

Engaging civic leaders

Alderman Donovan said a series of special Public Safety Committee meetings this summer (**schedule attached**) will offer civic leaders the same opportunity to join the fray and take collaborative action. Each special meeting will examine the role of a different facet of the public safety process, starting with the police department **on June 6**.

“I hope these meetings prove to be a valuable opportunity to foster collaboration between law enforcement and government agencies, while at the same time providing citizens with some insight into the public safety process,” Alderman Donovan said.

Engaging police officers

Additionally, Alderman Donovan said immediate action is needed to avert the potential effects of mass police retirements. According to an analysis by the Employees’ Retirement System, 209 officers will be eligible to retire this year, and another 122 will be retirement-eligible in 2017.

“We have been warning for years that this retirement wave would be coming, and now here it is,” Alderman Donovan said. “The bottom line is you cannot replace an officer who has 25-plus years on the job with a new recruit, but you need to take the steps necessary to fill those positions now.”

Alderman Donovan, President Hamilton and nine of their colleagues delivered a letter (**attached**) to **Mayor Tom Barrett** on Wednesday asking him to include in his proposed 2017 executive budget sufficient funding to address the police staffing issue.

Schedule of Special Meetings of the Milwaukee Common Council Public Safety Committee

All meetings will begin at 9:00 a.m., and will be held in Room 301-B of City Hall.

June 6 – Milwaukee Police Department

June 10 – Office of the Milwaukee County District Attorney

June 20 – Attorney General of the State of Wisconsin

June 24 – Milwaukee County Sheriff

June 27 – Milwaukee County Circuit Court and City of Milwaukee Municipal Court

July 8 – Wisconsin Department of Corrections

July 11 – Milwaukee County Office of Mental Health and City of Milwaukee Office of Violence Prevention



MILWAUKEE COMMON COUNCIL

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June 1, 2016

The Honorable,
Mayor Tom Barrett

Dear Mayor Barrett,

We are informed by the Employees' Retirement System that, counting together only this year and next, 235 officers of the Milwaukee Police Department will be eligible for a full service retirement. This does not include the 96 individuals represented by the Milwaukee Police Supervisors' Organization who are eligible for a full service retirement in this same period. We do not need to tell you that these men and women represent some of the best employees the city has – trained, experienced, and tempered.

Under the best of circumstances these officers would be difficult to replace, but this class of eligible retirees comes at the same time the city is faced with a troubling increase in fear, crime, and disorder. Murder, non-fatal violence, armed robbery, car-jacking, and the rest have become regular news and much that is not reported in the media is communicated to our offices by residents who tell of unacceptable response times and, frankly, of fear for themselves, their families, and their community. Our residents implore us and you to take action to correct this by ensuring the Milwaukee Police Department is adequately staffed.

Therefore, we the undersigned ask you to include in your proposed 2017 executive budget funding sufficient to address this issue. We stand ready to work with you through the budget process to confirm our mutual commitment to the safety and well-being of all residents of this great city.

Respectfully,

President Ashanti Hamilton

Ald. Robert G. Donovan

Ald. Jim Bohl

Ald. Tony Zielinski

Ald. Mark A. Borkowski

Ald. José G. Pérez

Ald. Cavalier Johnson

Ald. Chantia Lewis

Ald. Khalif J. Rainey

Ald. Milele A. Coggs

Ald. Russell W. Stamper, II