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## **Common Council refocuses on neighborhoods in amended city budget**

The Milwaukee Common Council on Friday adopted an amended 2017 city budget that refocuses priorities to improve neighborhood quality of life, boosts public safety using a holistic approach to crime, addresses health concerns about lead and invests in developing a diverse, productive workforce.

**Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton** said the 2017 adopted budget reflects residents' wishes for lower taxes and flat spending, while addressing urgent needs in many city neighborhoods.

"The Council has again acted responsibly by approving a city budget that holds property taxes steady and keeps a tight lid on spending, but this budget also directs resources to boost public safety and workforce development in parts of the city with great needs in those key areas," he said.

**Alderman Milele A. Coggs**, who as the chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee guided the process that amended the Mayor's proposed \$1.5 billion dollar budget, said she is proud of the resulting spending plan.

"Throughout the budget process, council members maintained a level of respect and professionalism that allowed us to work together and find ways to address quality of life concerns, in spite of the heavy taxing and revenue restrictions placed on us by the State of Wisconsin," Alderman Coggs said. "These were difficult decisions, but ultimately, we set funding priorities that will be best for the city as a whole."

**-More-**

## City budget/ADD ONE

Intended to help address systemic disparities in disadvantaged neighborhoods, one amendment repurposed \$472,000 to support the Milwaukee Promise program. These neighborhoods will benefit from intensive efforts including the presence of beat patrol officers from May to October, neighborhood clean-ups, senior citizen homeowner assistance, various job training programs and a high impact service program.

The council built on the mayor's efforts to address health concerns by creating \$600,000 in borrowing authority to fund the property owner portion of lead water service line replacements that will take place in 2017. Another amendment provides \$150,000 to distribute water filters to households with lead water service lines and children who are under the age of six.

And by reducing the number of brand new police patrol cars that will be put into service in 2017, the council was able to set aside \$150,000 to support neighborhood block watch efforts. The funds will pay for signage, cameras and additional street lighting in 15 neighborhoods which experience a high incidence of mobile drug-dealing.

"Sometimes the most effective way to combat neighborhood crime isn't to send in a couple of extra officers," Alderman Hamilton said, "but to mobilize the residents themselves against a criminal nuisance they would rather see go away."

"We hear regularly from residents who are frustrated with the frequency of mobile drug dealing in their neighborhoods where the transactions take place so quickly, police cannot respond in time," Alderwoman Coggs said. "This measure empowers those neighbors to help serve as additional eyes and ears on their block."

Other amendments set aside \$500,000 for a future community disparity study, provided \$50,000 for a new sexually-transmitted infection clinic, increased funding for MPS's driver education program by \$50,000 and helped fund a Midnight Basketball program for inner-city young people.

The final amended 2017 budget is down nearly \$13 million from the 2016 spending plan, a decrease of 0.8 percent, and the property tax levy will be cut \$9.2 million dollars. The property tax rate will climb only 5 cents to \$10.66 per one thousand dollars of assessed value.