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FOR INFORMATION CALL

January 25, 2016

Ald. Terry L. Witkowski
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“Keep the Change” initiative proposed to address panhandling

Measure one of several key agenda items for Thursday Public Safety Committee meeting

Common Council legislation establishing a “**Keep the Change**” program is aiming to address the city’s burgeoning panhandling problem.

The proposed multifaceted resolution to create the “Keep the Change” program, sponsored by **Alderman Terry L. Witkowski**, will be heard by the **Public Safety Committee** when it meets **at 9:00 a.m. Thursday (January 28) in room 301-B** at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.

Thursday’s meeting will be televised live on the City Channel (Channel 25 on Time Warner Cable and on AT&T U-Verse Channel 99) in the City of Milwaukee. It can also be viewed via streaming video on the city website at www.city.milwaukee.gov/Channel25.

Alderman Witkowski, chair of the Public Safety Committee, said Milwaukee and other cities are seeing a growing number of panhandlers, especially individuals standing at intersections, near off-ramps and on medians asking for money. “The problem is multidimensional, but it is definitely made worse by people giving the panhandlers easy money – money that most likely will be used for items that feed addiction,” he said.

“If we offer sensible alternative options and information about resources, we believe we can reduce the (panhandling) problem, and that is what ‘Keep the Change’ is about,” he said.

According to the resolution, studies have shown that donations given to panhandlers are frequently used to support drug and alcohol dependencies, and rarely result in any long-term improvement in the panhandlers’ quality of life. “Keep the Change” aims to both reduce the number of panhandlers funding drug and alcohol dependencies through donations and to provide meaningful support for those who are affected by homelessness, Alderman Witkowski said.

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Public Safety Committee/ADD ONE

The resolution directs the city Department of Administration to establish “Keep the Change” to discourage donations to panhandlers. It will include the distribution of informational cards and a city website to act as a clearinghouse for resources for those affected by homelessness.

Specifically, “Keep the Change” would feature:

- A city-wide public awareness campaign focused on discouraging donations to panhandlers. Instead, citizens would be encouraged to donate to charitable agencies that provide services to homeless persons.
- City signage (in the right-of-way) promoting the “Keep the Change” campaign within the City of Milwaukee.
- A city website to act as a clearinghouse for resources to assist those who are homeless, have drug or alcohol dependencies, or confront other challenges that can lead to or be a part of homelessness.
- Information cards relating to the availability of social services through the Milwaukee County 2-1-1 hotline.

In other business, the committee will:

- Consider a resolution authorizing the Milwaukee Police Department to accept and fund a **Crisis Intervention Training** grant through the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. The measure authorizes the Milwaukee Police Department to accept and fund a Crisis Intervention Training grant through the Greater Milwaukee foundation in the amount of \$500,000. The purpose of this grant is to fund the salary and overtime of one police officer, and expenses for research and assessment, presenter fees, professional videos, actors for CIT scenarios and miscellaneous equipment and supplies to assist with the Milwaukee Police Department’s Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) program.
- Consider accepting a grant from the **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)** in the amount of \$105,288 to fund overtime for six officers assigned to the Milwaukee Area Violent Crime Task Force working to identify and target for prosecution criminal enterprise groups and/or individuals responsible for crimes of violence and to focus on the apprehension of dangerous fugitives where there may be a federal investigative interest.

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Public Safety Committee/ADD TWO

- Consider a resolution authorizing the acceptance of additional funding for the **Zoo Interchange Traffic Mitigation Project** overtime agreement with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. The measure authorizes the Milwaukee Police Department to accept additional funds for the Zoo Interchange Traffic Mitigation Project overtime agreement with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation in the amount of \$5,000 for a total of \$30,000. The purpose of this project is to fund overtime expenses for traffic control assistance and to ensure that emergency response capabilities are not adversely affected by roadway construction.
- Hear from representatives from the Milwaukee Water Works and the Milwaukee Health Department will discuss issues relating to **water quality in the area of the Milwaukee Harbor**. Recent news reports have stated that tests show the harbor to be a “hot spot” for bacteria.

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