



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 27, 2017

# **Alderman Donovan requests state select committee to study Milwaukee's fiscal crisis**

Today **Alderman Bob Donovan** reached out to Governor Walker (**see attached letter**) to respectfully request that he form a select committee to study possible solutions to the City of Milwaukee's ongoing critical fiscal challenges.

"I write today as the Chair of the City of Milwaukee's Public Safety and Health Committee to ask you to appoint a select committee to review this City's finances and make long-term recommendations to help restore its financial sustainability," Alderman Donovan states.

The letter from Alderman Donovan continues: "Yesterday morning, Mayor Tom Barrett presented a proposed 2018 executive budget that includes the elimination of nearly three dozen positions of police officer and more than six dozen fire fighters. This even as crimes of violence, fear, and disorder have increased to levels not seen in our community for many years."

In the letter Alderman Donovan cites rising health care and other benefit costs, costs of maintaining police department resources, a looming wave of retirements from police officers hired in the 1990s and the continued decline in real dollars of State Shared Revenue payments to the city as helping to fuel the fiscal crisis.

He writes: "Even if the Common Council were able to significantly increase its tax levy to pay for more police officers -- which it cannot -- I'm not certain the heavily-burdened property tax payers of this community could bear much more."

**-More-**

## Select Committee Request/ADD ONE

Alderman Donovan said he has also reached out to City Attorney Grant F. Langley (see attached letter) regarding the feasibility of a **public safety fee** to help cover the city's mounting public safety costs.

"I'm not exactly excited about (the possible new fee) but at this point I believe we have no choice but to look at it," he said, adding: "And by the way I'm not optimistic such a fee would pass legal muster."

Alderman Donovan said city experts are telling him that next year's city budget will be even worse. "We simply must act because we can't continue this downward spiral – it's not sustainable. What – are we just going to lay off more officers and fire fighters (next year)?"

The proposed formation of a state select committee will require a bipartisan approach that is a rare commodity of late in Madison, Alderman Donovan said.

"The elected leaders will need to end the partisan bickering and move toward solutions for Milwaukee – the economic engine that helps stir the drink for the entire state," he said.

"Our constituents – the good and decent people across Milwaukee – are the ones suffering and they are beyond frustrated with the fiscal crisis, increasing taxes and our public safety challenges," Alderman Donovan said.

"I'm hopeful a state select committee can help us find some fixes and stop the bleeding," he said.

## **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **CHAIR**

- Public Safety and Health

### **MEMBER**

- Public Works
- Steering and Rules
- Anti-Graffiti Policy



**ROBERT G. DONOVAN**  
ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

September 27, 2017

The Honorable,  
Governor Scott Walker

State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7863  
Madison, WI 53707-7863

Dear Governor Walker,

I write today as the Chair of the City of Milwaukee's Public Safety and Health Committee to ask you to appoint a select committee to review this City's finances and make long-term recommendations to help restore its financial sustainability.

Yesterday morning, Mayor Tom Barrett presented a proposed 2018 executive budget that includes the elimination of nearly three dozen positions of police officer and more than six dozen fire fighters. This even as crimes of violence, fear, and disorder have increased to levels not seen in our community for many years.

And yet, while I think the Mayor's obsession with building a streetcar in such a difficult fiscal environment is entirely out of place, the challenges of this budget cannot be laid entirely to his charge. Health care and other benefit costs continue to spiral upwards, well out of the City's control. The police department alone now consumes every dollar received from the City's property tax levy and matters will only become worse as we see a wave of retirements from those police officers hired in the 1990s. At the same time, our revenues are capped and State Shared Revenue has been declining in real dollars for over a decade. Even if the

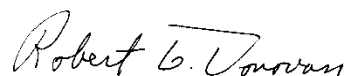
Common Council were able to significantly increase its tax levy to pay for more police officers -- which it cannot -- I'm not certain the heavily-burdened property tax payers of this community could bear much more.

I therefore ask for your help. Whatever may have been the partisan differences you and the Mayor have had, I believe you both want the best for the City of Milwaukee and its residents. Our books are open and our policies transparent. I ask you to appoint a select committee, appoint whoever you choose to it, and grant it whatever charge you see fit. In the end, however, I ask that it review our budgets, review our spending plans, and make recommendations for helping us to right our fiscal ship; not only for 2018 but in the decades to come.

I, and I believe the Common Council, stand ready to work with you and this committee on this vital task and I look forward to your support.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Respectfully,



Ald. Robert G. Donovan

8th District



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### **CHAIR**

- Public Safety and Health

### **MEMBER**

- Public Works
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**ROBERT G. DONOVAN**  
ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

September 25, 2017

Grant Langley  
City Attorney  
841 N. Broadway  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Mr. Langley,

The City of Milwaukee has far too long struggled to keep its budget in balance by only cutting spending. While much in this area has been done -- too much in some key areas in my opinion -- we must begin to explore aggressively revenue alternatives. I know some years ago thought was given to imposing a public safety fee like that now in place for snow and ice removal and for storm water management.

The question on which I would ask your office to opine is whether or not the City could impose a public safety fee for the purpose of paying for both the police and fire departments. At whatever rate, this fee would be assessed to all property owners on a per-unit basis and would be directed solely to supplement -- not replace -- current spending on police and fire services.

If permitted, I am particularly interested in whether this new revenue and spending would leave the City in violation of the state's Expenditure Restraint Program. I am also interested in knowing whether the recently-enacted statute requiring all new fees established and collected to be offset by tax reductions would apply to a public safety fee.

Given the imminence of the 2018 budget process, your timely attention to this inquiry would be greatly appreciated.

Should you have questions or require clarification from me, do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert G. Donovan".

Ald. Robert G. Donovan

8th District

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