

## **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

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# **In Defense of MPD's Pursuit Policy**

## **How quickly some seem to forget**

### **Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan April 25, 2019**

Those people coming forward to question the Milwaukee Police Department's pursuit policy have memories much poorer than my 92-year-old mother.

How else to explain why so many seem to have forgotten the bitter fruit of former Chief Edward Flynn's horribly misguided "no pursuit" policies?

For eight years front-line police officers told me and my colleagues on the Common Council that Chief Flynn's policy had encouraged, in fact nurtured, an atmosphere of chaos and disrespect for the law. These brave men and women told us that, with no fear of being pursued, criminals felt at liberty to do whatever they might choose and all they needed to do was drive away.

How else to explain the car-jackers and joy-riders who are now telling police officers, while under arrest, how surprised they are that they were chased?

Have those questioning the policy forgotten the testimony of the members of the Big Money Addicts heroin ring, quoted in a *Journal Sentinel* article from February 16, 2018?:

*The game changed in the summer of 2014, Smith and Lewis said, when BMA members noticed Milwaukee police would stop chasing them, at least not if they went fast enough. The department's pursuits were sharply limited after a series of fatal crashes.*

*Asked by Assistant District Attorney Laura Crivello how the policy changed their operations, Smith paused.*

*"We could do it without being worried about getting pulled over," he said finally.*

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*The change also made the operation more lethal. Before that, the dealers were careful about carrying guns as they sold drugs, worried if they were caught they would face a drug-dealing and gun charge, Smith said.*

*But once they realized “no chase policy” was in place, they armed themselves with guns outfitted with high-capacity magazines. They always had a round in the chamber — “one up top,” as he put it.*

*“Never know when ya gotta fire,” Smith testified.*

This is what the Common Council was trying to prevent when it urged the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners to direct Chief Flynn to change his policy – a step that, to its credit, the Board took.

This is what current Police Chief Alfonso Morales is trying to prevent when he says the Department will always review its policies, but will continue to pursue.

There can be no question that injuries and deaths resulting from police chases are great misfortunes. The fault for these incidents, however, rests not with police officers in pursuit, but with those individuals who against law and common sense flee from the police.

That is something really worth remembering.