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ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

# **Mayor Barrett's 2020 Budget cuts 60 police officers – and that's the good news**

## **Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan October 10, 2019**

The media has been running stories in the past few weeks about the Mayor's 2020 Budget, how it threatens to cut 60 police officer positions through attrition, and how this might affect the public safety of our community.

I only wish this was the worst of it.

Hidden below the headlines is the even harder truth that, next year, 244 officers will be eligible for retirement. Let that number sink in and ask yourself how the Milwaukee Police Department, already challenged as it is to keep up with troubling increases in crime and disorder, can manage.

Admittedly, not all of these officers will retire, but many will and no one, from the Mayor on down, can assure the public that the majority won't.

And it is true that only a net of 60 positions will be cut. Serving as a police officer, however, isn't the sort of job you just walk into, where one officer leaves and another arrives to take his or her place. It takes months of training at our police academy followed by another half year of probation before an officer is deemed ready. What is more, the 244 officers eligible to retire represent centuries of combined experience in policing. This is front-line, on-the-job training earned the hard way that cannot be replaced in a classroom.

In my conversations with the Milwaukee Police Association, I have been told more than once that the union has made suggestions to the Mayor as to how veteran officers might be retained – encouraged to remain on the job. These same representatives tell me they've met with little response and no action.

So, while the Common Council will soon debate 60 positions, my own thoughts turn to the summer of 2020, when I will be retired from public service. How long will residents wait for a police response from a department short not 60, but 100, or even 200 officers? How much can a department so desperately short of officers be reasonably expected to do?

These are questions I sincerely hope the media will ask all involved in our up-coming deliberations.

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