

## **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

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**CAVALIER JOHNSON**  
COMMON COUNCIL PRESIDENT  
ALDERMAN, 2ND DISTRICT

# **Turning down federal safety grant could hamstring efforts to curb deadly threats**

## **Statement of Common Council President Cavalier Johnson November 23, 2020**

Early yesterday morning (Sunday, November 22) a driver heading west on Capitol Drive at a high rate of speed crashed into another vehicle at N. 68<sup>th</sup> St. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Aldermanic District. The terrible crash killed the 26-year-old man driving the striking vehicle, and also killed the 21-year-old woman driving the vehicle that was struck. Two passengers in the striking vehicle were taken to the hospital and are expected to survive.

My prayers go to the families and friends of the deceased, as well as to those of the surviving passengers.

Sadly, this is nothing new along Capitol Drive. This tragic and preventable crash just compounds the high number of accidents that have occurred on Capitol Drive over the last number of years because of reckless drivers, including the crash that caused the death of Police Officer Kou Her last year at N. 60<sup>th</sup> and W. Capitol.

Although not often publicized or mentioned, the Milwaukee Police Department has generally done an excellent job of addressing reckless driving, especially with its Reckless Driving Reduction Initiative (**RDRI**) enforcement. Unfortunately, parts of Capitol Drive have been hyper prone to horrible accidents and a stretch of the roadway has been described as the most dangerous in Wisconsin. Capitol Drive is a Wisconsin State Highway (190), and in the long term, the State should bring resources to bear to alter the built environment to slow traffic down and reduce the likelihood of deadly crashes.

But that State help could be years away, and in the short term I'm very concerned that there will be even less traffic enforcement as the City sheds 200 plus police officers via attrition as scheduled in 2020 and 2021.

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That is why I believe it is imperative that the City accepts the nearly \$10 million federal COPS grant that will fund 30 officer positions for three years (**the full Common Council will take up this important grant tomorrow – Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup>**). These positions will help to present the Milwaukee Police Department with greater flexibility to address issues like speeding and reckless driving which is a chief concern among Milwaukeeans from every neighborhood across our city.

Additionally, by turning down the COPS funding, we would severely jeopardize the lobbying efforts that the City has engaged in for the last several years to encourage State government to grant us opportunities to raise other needed funding that would better position us to provide property tax relief and invest in critical needs as outlined in the Move Forward MKE plan.

Trust that I understand the concerns of citizens who have raised their voices in opposition to this grant. Justly, they want to see reforms in the way that policing is carried out and I agree. I also agree with the vast majority of constituents who I have spoken with over the course of the last several weeks who witness incidents like the one that happened at 68<sup>th</sup> and Capitol early yesterday and are justly concerned as well.

I firmly believe we must make the choice to accept the funding and not allow our city to risk taking a step back from addressing deadly threats at a critical moment.

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