



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

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Another Step in a 1,000-mile Journey

Joint statement from members of the Milwaukee Common Council: Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, Alderwoman Chantia Lewis, Alderwoman Nikiya Dodd, Alderman Cavalier Johnson, Alderman Nik Kovac, Alderman Robert J. Bauman, Alderman Mark Borkowski and Alderman José G. Pérez

The relationship between the City of Milwaukee’s Police Department and the people it is intended to serve has often been difficult. Ours is not the first generation to struggle with the excessive use of force, racial discrimination, sworn officers doing jobs that ought to be done by civilians, and the unbearable long-term cost of our protective services. It may be, however, that this moment, our moment, is one where the reality of the coming pension crisis and the urgent demands of our community finally come together to compel the first difficult steps towards something better.

That is how we see the commitment made by Police Chief Jeffrey Norman and his command staff in the attached letter to the Common Council. Consider what is written there:

*The department commits itself to a “right-sizing” process, using performance based metrics to determine how many sworn officers this community needs. And it has agreed to do it under the guidance of a professional study like the well-regarded “Matrix” inquiry of several years ago. In all the debate surrounding the department, no one has proven able or willing to state, with evidence, how many sworn officers this community needs. This is too great a variable to be left unsolved for and finding the correct answer will require the full cooperation of the department, something that could not be counted on with past administrations.

This also relates directly to the need to replace sworn officers with civilian employees. Not only because the latter tend to be more affordable, but because there are certain tasks that can be done just as well or better by someone who isn’t a trained, sworn police officer. Too often, this department has had only a hammer as a tool so it thinks every problem is a nail. Trauma-informed care, violence prevention, culturally-aware intervention, are all approaches to reducing violence and improving public safety that should be given to those trained in these fields, not in law enforcement. This is a real chance to evaluate these possibilities as well.

*The letter commits the department to continuing and improving its community-based policing efforts. Its community-oriented policing S.O.P. is expected in the near future and, perhaps even more significantly, there is a written commitment to working with the Community Collaborative Commission to shape long-term policies driven by public input. This is a level of transparency that, intentionally or not, the MPD has too often lacked. Seeing it turn itself outward to the public would be a welcome change.

*The letter commits the department to working to reduce response times, not by simply adding new police officers, but by exploiting technology to make response more efficient and investing in violence-prevention strategies that make calling the police less necessary. The 2021 budget transfers a large portion of the Technical Communications Division to a different department in the hope of better integrating it with the City's technology infrastructure and improve not only call times, but the analysis of police dispatching and deployment.

*The letter commits the department to continue its deployments to the Promise Zones, areas of the community that greatly benefitted from a familiar, community-focused, police presence in previous years. The work in these neighborhoods has produced grassroots-inspired programs like SafeZones - a local version of a violence interruption strategy that has been adopted and expanded in the Office of Violence Prevention's "414 Life" program. MPD's role is often crucial in creating collaborations that yield results for the community. Partnerships like this have been readily forgotten as one administration is replaced by another and seeing a commitment to this collaborative platform reduced to writing by MPD leadership is encouraging.

*And the letter commits the department to continuing and improving its efforts in the area of traffic enforcement. The recommendations of the Reckless Driving Taskforce outline a role for education, infrastructure improvements, and enforcement. If quality of life policing has any meaning it surely includes ridding our streets of reckless drivers who take so much in terms of property damage and lives. Even more, though, the department will work towards preventing reckless behaviors before they become criminal and even fatal. As the city's first line of defense in this regard, the public should know about their efforts to address this consuming issue.

Are these all the things that we hope to see in the relationship between the Milwaukee Police Department and this community? Of course not.

This agreement, however, if updated, communicated, and earnestly pursued, could represent the first, tentative steps of a journey by which Milwaukee walks away from the fraught history of its relationship with its police department and becomes an example of a better way forward.



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Jeffrey B. Norman
Acting Chief of Police

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January 12, 2021

Honorable Common Council Members

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Over the course of the past several months there have been numerous lengthy and passionate public and private conversations, meetings and hearings as it relates to the acceptance of the \$9.7 million 2020 COPS Hiring Grant. The Milwaukee Police Department understands and appreciates that the nature of these conversations has focused largely on the context of police reform. We also understand the scope of the debate extends far beyond adding 30 new police officers and write this letter to address some of these issues. Given the unknown future of our next Chief of Police and the long-term commitments discussed below, this letter is signed by the entire Executive Command Staff of the Milwaukee Police Department.

We undoubtedly agree that there is, and always will be, an opportunity to improve the Milwaukee Police Department, particularly in the area of police reform. We feel it is important to document the positive progress our agency has made over the past six months. Many of the reforms are the result of dialogue with and proposals from the Common Council. These efforts include:

- Working collaboratively with the community to root out the underlying concerns and obtain actionable feedback.
- Documenting our de-escalation tactics in our Use of Force Standard Operating Procedure.
- Explicitly banning chokeholds, except in life-preserving measures.
- Prohibiting shooting into vehicles, except in life-preserving measures.
- Formally banning the use of Oleoresin Capsicum (OC spray) for peaceful demonstrations.
- Requiring officers to render medical attention if someone asserts "I can't breathe" or a similar statement.
- Mandating a use of force report whenever an officer points a firearm at a person.

- Working in partnership with the Community Collaborative Commission to develop a Community Oriented Policing Standard Operating Procedure.
- Explicitly committing to resolving conflict through the use of professional communication skills, crisis intervention and de-escalation tactics when feasible.
- Increasing the accountability of our members as it relates to compliance with the *Collins* agreement.

Cumulatively, the Milwaukee Police Department can now proudly claim that it is in compliance with the “8 Can’t Wait” campaign. We truly believe we are a better police department as a result of these reforms, some of which were long overdue.

We would also like to highlight the realities we are facing as a police department. Contemporaneous with the calls for reform, there has never been a greater demand for police services. Over the last year, we have experienced a 3% increase in the calls for police service, while addressing a nearly 100% increase in homicide rate and 70% increase in non-fatal shootings. The impact on response times has also been significant, particularly with lower priority calls. Since last year, there has been a 13% increase in priority 3 response times and a 26% increase in priority 4 response times.

We are also writing to formally reiterate that the Milwaukee Police Department unequivocally aspires to accomplish the seven items highlighted in substitute File #200676 (“Substitute resolution relative to acceptance and funding of a 2020 COPS Hiring Program Grant.”). We appreciate these items are a reflection of community demands and agree in principal to work with the Common Council to accomplish these goals. Specifically:

- **We will continue to work toward “rightsizing” the police department.** Internally, we will continue to incorporate a performance-based approach for producing measurements for police staffing and allocations. This includes:
 1. Our support of efforts called upon by the recommendations included in the 2009 Office of Community Oriented Policing Services - University of Michigan report, “A Performance-Based Approach to Police Staffing and Allocations,” which included data from the Milwaukee Police Department.
 2. Our strong backing of a civilian-sworn patrol resource analysis of MPD, similar in nature to the 2007 Patrol Resource Analysis conducted by Matrix Consulting Group. We look forward to working cooperatively with the Department of Administration to complete this study.
- **We remain committed to improving police response times.** One of the key challenges to reductions in sworn staff is the ability to promptly respond to calls for service, particularly lower priority calls. Nevertheless, we remain committed to finding ways to reduce response times and will do so by utilizing technology to improve efficiencies,

actively assisting the transition of our Technical Communications Division to a new city department and working collaboratively to reevaluate the types of calls that can be outsourced to other entities. This includes our ongoing partnership with the Office of Violence Prevention to proactively employ strategies intended to reduce crime from happening. The additional strength afforded by this grant will assist MPD with this overall goal.

- **We will expedite implementation of previously-authorized technology integration systems.** We appreciate that technology operates as a force multiplier to improve efficiencies, productivity and community engagement. We are committed to expediting the implementation of technologies, such as Project Greenlight, to reduce the strain on sworn and civilian personnel from budget constraints.
- **We remain committed to participating in the Promise Zones.** But for COVID-19, the Milwaukee Police Department would have continued our ongoing commitment to Promise Zones deployment in 2020. We look forward to returning to this successful form of community engagement and crime prevention.
- **We are committed to community oriented policing strategies.** In collaboration with the Community Collaborative Commission, we have developed a forthcoming Community Oriented Policing Standard Operating Procedure. We look forward to publicly demonstrating our commitment to building and maintaining relationships with community members and groups, and to collaborate with the community to address public safety issues and identify solutions to neighborhood problems.
- **We will continue to prioritize traffic enforcement.** In 2020, the City of Milwaukee experienced a phenomenon of less crashes but more fatalities, suggesting that our reckless driving has become even more dangerous. We are committed to working with the community and our system partners to augment our efforts and improve reckless driving enforcement with the resources we are afforded. For example, this past fall we conducted reckless driving enforcement paid by a recently created special purpose account funded by the sale of traffic reports previously sold by the state.
- **We welcome public updates.** We are happy to report on this grant under the timeline established in substitute resolution 200676, or as the Council deems necessary.

Ultimately, acceptance of this grant provides staffing to support these goals in light of recent budget cuts. The new recruits that would be hired as part of this grant, many of whom are Police Aides and city residents, would provide much needed diversity. Also, a condition of the grant is participation in a federal task force to help address violent crime.

Finally, we continue to extend our invitation to participate in a ride-along or meeting directly with the executive command staff at your convenience. We value constructive collaboration and hope to improve the city through positive partnership.

Regards,



Acting Chief Jeffrey B. Norman



Inspector Shunta Boston-Smith



Inspector Willie Murphy



Chief of Staff Nick DeSiato



Inspector Paul Formolo



Inspector Nicole Waldner