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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Bob Donovan
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It's The Law: Citizens Can Help Stamp Out Street Noise

A Few Easy Steps Allow Residents to Report Loud Car Stereos; Police Also Taking Aim With "Operation Bass Busters"

A new ordinance that allows Milwaukee citizens to lodge complaints against owners of vehicles blasting excessively loud music and/or sounds generated by amplification devices is simple to utilize, according to Ald. Bob Donovan, the measure's principal sponsor.

Approved by the Common Council and signed into law by Mayor Tom Barrett in May, the ordinance went into effect on July 1. Ald. Donovan emphasized that the ordinance allows any citizen to report nuisance loud vehicle music and/or noise by simply calling the Milwaukee Police Department's non-emergency phone number (933-4444) and providing a license plate number, the date and time of the violation, a brief description of the noise, and their name and contact information.

"People asked for a way to help police identify and investigate vehicles with window-rattling stereos, and this system is easy to use, easy to access, and I strongly encourage people to help police in this area," he said, adding: "The police need our help – they can't do it all by themselves."

Once a citizen lodges a loud car stereo nuisance complaint, MPD will have an officer investigate the complaint and determine whether sufficient probable cause exists. If probable cause is found to be present, then a citation is issued to the owner or operator of the vehicle. This citation is based upon the statement of the complaining citizen along with their intention to appear in court as the complainant. If the owner objects, then he or she will be allowed to challenge the complaint/s through the court system.

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Loud Vehicle Sounds Targeted/ADD ONE

However, if a police officer observes a suspected violator and immediately determines that probable cause exists, a citation can also be issued. The ordinance states that a first citation must be charged by the City Attorney in order to charge the violator or owner for the costs of subsequent police service.

Ald. Donovan, chair of the Council's Public Safety Committee, said police have also begun enforcing the city's "disturbing the peace" noise ordinance through a resumption of "Operation Bass Busters," which assigns special squads to measure vehicle music and noise with officers trained in the use of special decibel-measuring devices. Once an officer identifies an offending vehicle, a squad is dispatched to pull it over and a ticket or tickets are issued.