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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Willie L. Hines, Jr.
Ald. Michael Murphy
(414) 286-2221

Common Council Restores Mayor's Cuts To Public Safety, Adopts 2009 City Budget

The Milwaukee Common Council this evening approved a 2009 city budget that restored firefighter and police positions while coming in nearly a full percentage point below the tax levy in Mayor Tom Barrett's proposed executive budget.

The 2009 tax rate approved by the Common Council is \$8.044 per \$1,000 of assessed value – a 0.487% increase from the \$8.01 tax rate for 2008. The tax levy rose 3.91% – going from \$227 million in 2008 to just more than \$236 million for 2009. The mayor's budget called for a levy increase of 4.8%. The new tax levy means that the owner of a \$150,000 home will see a \$4.05 increase in the city portion of the tax bill, from \$1,202.55 to \$1,206.60.

The budget – approved this evening at the end of an 11-hour meeting in the Council Chamber at City Hall – added full firefighter staffing on eight of nine ladder trucks – turning back the mayor's proposal that would have cut firefighters on nine ladder trucks. The Council also restored cuts to the Milwaukee Public Library that would have meant closing some branches, cutting staff and reducing hours. The Council also restored cuts that would have meant 56 fewer sworn police officers in city neighborhoods.

The Council approved a 13.6% increase in the solid waste fee – less than half of the mayor's proposed increase of 28%.

Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr. said the Council "demonstrated diligence and leadership under difficult circumstances with easily the worst budget situation in years."

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Common Council Adopts 2009 Budget/ADD ONE

“It was gratifying to see the Common Council demonstrate such innovation and leadership as it wrestled with the budget throughout a long day,” he said.

“But the hard work has paid off with a budget that is much improved over what we received from the Mayor’s Office,” he said. “During public listening sessions we heard from residents who made it clear they want strong public safety and to keep their library services, and the Council managed to restore firefighters, police officers and libraries without raising taxes or the solid waste fee to the level originally proposed by the mayor.”

Ald. Michael J. Murphy, chair of the Council’s Finance and Personnel Committee, said the economic downturn and other factors made this year’s budget the most challenging in his nearly 20 years of the Council. “The fact that we were able to craft a tax levy freeze budget that maintains essential services without burdening taxpayers is a credit to the discipline and ingenuity of the members of the Finance & Personnel Committee and of the Council as a whole,” he said.

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