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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Michael Murphy
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Finance & Personnel Committee Comes In Under Mayor's 2007 Proposed Budget

The Common Council tomorrow will be sizing up a 2007 city budget that is leaner than the budget proposed by Mayor Tom Barrett some six weeks ago.

Today the Council's Finance & Personnel Committee voted to recommend an amended budget with a net tax levy reduction of \$60,000 from what was proposed by the mayor. The committee voted to reduce the tax rate to \$7.99 per \$1,000 of assessed value - just a hair under the mayor's proposed \$8.00 per \$1,000.

The full Council meets tomorrow to consider proposed budget amendments and to make final adjustments before voting to adopt a 2007 city budget. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. in the third floor Council Chamber at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.

Ald. Michael J. Murphy, chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee, said the committee voted to restore more than \$600,000 to the mayor's proposed cuts in fire department staffing. "The mayor proposed reducing staffing on eight ladder companies from five firefighters to four, but we put back the full five (firefighters) on three of the eight ladder companies," he said. "If we had gone along with that recommendation, the budget would have been cut by more than \$1.6 million but our level of public safety - in my opinion - would have been reduced. In the end we voted to cut the fire department by \$1 million."

"By restoring part of the firefighter staffing and additional funding for some fire equipment, I believe we made a responsible decision that will result in continued first-class fire protection for our citizens at a reduced cost," Ald. Murphy said.

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Committee Recommends Lean 2007 Budget/ADD ONE

Also today the committee approved a recommended reorganization of the Fire and Police Commission that will allow for greater independence and oversight. The body also restored some \$100,000 in cuts the mayor had recommended for the Milwaukee Public Library.

In other action today the committee:

- Voted to put the brakes on the mayor's **sustainable boulevards program**, instead restoring boulevard maintenance funding to its 2006 level. Members agreed that more input from Council members is needed before moving forward with the mayor's boulevard program.
- Approved an amendment offered by Ald. Murphy to add \$2.5 million in general obligation borrowing for the **affordable housing trust fund**.

Ald. Murphy, the Council's senior member, said the Council has adopted city budgets with flat or reduced tax rates 99.9% of the time for the past 17-18 years, and Milwaukee's tax rate puts it in the "top two or three" lowest taxing bodies in Milwaukee County. "With taxes going up in other municipalities, at the state level, and at the school district and college levels, residents in Milwaukee can know that we're doing our job to keep a reasonable level of city services while keeping taxes to a minimum," he said.