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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Veto Override Ensures City Budget That Protects Public Safety, Continues Economic Development Push

The Milwaukee Common Council's vote this afternoon to override Mayor Tom Barrett's veto of a key item in the 2007 city budget shows its solidarity in efforts to maintain strong public safety services and to build on economic development initiatives that are helping to create thousands of jobs, Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr. said.

The Council voted 11-3 (with one alderman absent) today to reject the mayor's veto of its 14-1 vote to reduce staffing for five of the city's 16 ladder companies from five firefighters to four. The mayor sought to reduce staffing levels for eight (half) of the ladder companies. The veto was the only one issued by the mayor in the 2007 city budget.

"Most Council members were not comfortable with the scope of that (MFD) staffing reduction and wouldn't support it," said Ald. Hines.

"I want to thank the members of the Common Council for demonstrating their continuing commitment to protecting the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the City of Milwaukee by voting against the mayor's proposed firefighter staffing cuts," he said, noting the Council also voted earlier this year to use money from a special police account to add a total of 40 recruits to two police classes this fall and to pay for police overtime.

Council Overrides Budget Veto/ADD ONE

Ald. Hines said the Council listened to constituents, the majority of whom strongly advocated for maintaining current levels of boulevard maintenance. In turn, the Council rejected the mayor's budget proposal that would have altered the way the city handles boulevard maintenance, noting the proposal included many unanswered questions and less of a focus on traditionally used flowers and plantings. He said the Council's 2007 budget moves proved clearly that it is shifting more resources toward maintaining city infrastructure.

"This year's budget process included dozens of items and proposals that had to be weighed carefully by the Council's Finance and Personnel Committee, and I want to express my thanks and pride in the professional and top-shelf job its members performed," said Ald. Hines. "Alderman (Michael) Murphy, the committee chair, deserves special recognition for the outstanding job he did for this Council and for the city as a whole."

The relocation of Manpower Inc.'s corporate headquarters from Glendale to downtown – an \$80 million project – the new deal to bring Wi-Fi (wireless Internet) service to the entire city, and the \$205 million proposal to bring retail/commercial, housing and offices to the former Pabst brewery site "clearly illustrates this Council's solid commitment to strengthening Milwaukee economically and creating jobs," Ald. Hines said.

The 2007 city budget – with a final tax rate of \$8.00 per \$1,000 of assessed value – means the council has adopted city budgets with flat or reduced tax rates 17 of the last 18 years.

With the final rate approved by the Council, the owner of a \$100,000 home will see a \$76 decrease in the city portion of the tax bill, from last year's \$876 to \$800. In the end the Council's approved budget was more than \$100,000 under the state-imposed property tax "freeze."