

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

MEMBER

- Public Safety Committee
- Public Works Committee
- Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee



ROBERT G. DONOVAN
Alderman, 8th District

June 16, 2014

Alderman Donovan
(414) 708-9417

Where's the Plan?

Another weekend of violence leaves two more innocent children wounded

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan

This past weekend bullets were again flying in Milwaukee neighborhoods, and my only question (again!) is this: What is Mayor Barrett offering to stop the deadly violence?

Just a few weeks ago, I sent a letter (**May 20 - attached**) to the mayor, asking that he develop a vision, strategy and plan for public safety in Milwaukee so that citizens might have an inkling of hope that the violence will subside, and that a better, more prosperous future might be just beyond the horizon.

I have yet to receive a response from the mayor.

The mayor's lack of response is – to put it mildly – deeply concerning. Look at it this way: If Milwaukee were a struggling company, the stockholders and members of the board of directors would be sounding the alarm and asking for the chief exec to come forward with a written plan with goals, objectives and a timetable to return the company to profitability. It wouldn't be considered unreasonable, and in fact it would be expected (and demanded!). The same holds true here.

But there is no such plan, and no such response from our mayor.

So, as a member of the city's board of directors, I am again calling on our executive to come forth with a plan – in writing – that I can share with the beleaguered citizens of Milwaukee, laying out how we can stem the daily drumbeat of deadly violence that is making life a living hell in certain city neighborhoods.

Those constituents certainly deserve a plan of action, and the sooner the better.

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ROBERT G. DONOVAN
Alderman, 8th District

May 20, 2014

Mayor Tom Barrett
City Hall, Room 201
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Barrett:

I happened to catch you on the news last night saying that, very soon, 65 additional police officers will be hitting the streets of Milwaukee. It sounded good. I was impressed. The only problem is, it's simply not true. Let me set the record straight. As of last week, 48 police officer recruits were in the Safety Academy – two fewer than the 50 originally promised. They will graduate in mid-July. Typically, new graduates are assigned to field training officers, who continue their training on the job for several more months. If I'm somehow mistaken and through some miracle you've been able to conjure up 17 additional officers, please, by all means, keep on conjuring. Heaven knows we could use the extra help! One final suggestion: you may want to assign those 17 phantom officers to undercover duty, since no one will ever be able to identify them.

Now, to the purpose of this letter. In the past week, Milwaukee witnessed 18 shootings and 5 homicides. Ironically, this week had been proclaimed "Ceasefire Week," a series of events encouraging nonviolence in the city. This level of violence is shocking, simply shocking. Let's analyze these numbers for a moment. If this week were the norm for Milwaukee – and I fear we may be headed in that direction – the city would experience over 940 shootings and more than 260 homicides each year!

What has happened to Milwaukee? Again, I say: what has happened to Milwaukee? I'm sure you would agree, the status quo simply cannot continue. **Therefore, today I am calling on you, as Milwaukee's pre-eminent elected official, Milwaukee's number one leader, to do just that -- lead our community out of this mess. Specifically, I am asking you to develop a vision, strategy and plan for public safety in Milwaukee. This plan must give the beleaguered citizens of this community hope, provide them with some light at the end of the tunnel, and foster their belief in a better, more prosperous future.**

-More-



The plan that I am requesting that you put forward must definitely go beyond a ceasefire Sabbath, gun buyback programs and peace marches. The plan should be in writing and encompass goals, objectives and a detailed time table for implementation.

I don't believe it is at all unreasonable to make this request of you. I stand committed to helping in any way I can to develop this plan.

As far as the seriousness of Milwaukee's crime problem, I feel compelled to make a few important points on this matter.

1. In my estimation, growing levels of crime and disorder are affecting too many neighborhoods in the city. If these problems are not addressed in a meaningful and timely manner, they will spread throughout the city like cancer.
2. Given the level of violence now plaguing this community, the Milwaukee Police Department is grossly understaffed to meet the challenges it faces. The chief and other MPD personnel may not voice this concern publicly, but it is the hard truth facing our overworked police force.
3. The use of MPD officers working overtime is not a viable, long-term solution to Milwaukee's public safety crisis. The use of MPD personnel working overtime can fill some of the gaps, so to speak, but in the chief's own words, he is literally "hemorrhaging" overtime. If anything, officers working overtime are experiencing even more "burnout" than the police force as a whole.
4. The 120 additional police officers in the 2014 City Budget won't begin to make a dent in the need for more officers. The 48 recruits being trained at the Safety Academy right now won't graduate and be on the streets until mid-summer, while the recruits hired for the other two 2014 recruit classes won't be available for patrol until 2015. The slow pace of putting additional officers on the streets, plus the huge number of sworn MPD personnel currently or soon to be eligible for retirement (over 300 by the end of 2015) means that little real progress is being made in bolstering Milwaukee's police force.
5. I'm also gravely concerned about the deployment of one-officer squads. This jeopardizes the safety of not only our citizens, but our police officers as well, requiring them to respond to potentially violent situations all alone. I'm sure you are aware there are some police districts where it's not uncommon to deploy, on some shifts, just 5, 6 or 8 officers to respond to calls for service and patrol an entire police district of up to 100,000 people. This dangerous situation is just unacceptable.
6. We should all be worried about the low morale of Milwaukee police officers. They are overwhelmed and simply cannot keep up with all the demands of their jobs. I don't need to point out to you that, on lists of occupations with the highest rates of suicide, divorce, etc., public safety officers are routinely at or near the top.

-More-

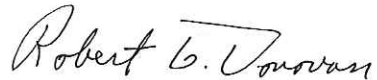


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As previously stated, I stand committed to working with you to develop and implement a substantive, workable and concrete plan that will move our city forward with respect to public safety. The citizens of Milwaukee deserve no less.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert G. Donovan".

Robert G. Donovan
Alderman, 8th District

