

Alderman Donovan: Requests state select committee to study Milwaukee's fiscal crisis

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Contact: Bill Arnold

Public Information Manager/City of Milwaukee/Public Information Division/Office of the City Clerk/Phone: (414)286.3285/ warnol@milwaukee.gov

Today Alderman Bob Donovan reached out to Governor Walker (see attached letter) to respectfully request that he form a select committee to study possible solutions to the City of Milwaukee's ongoing critical fiscal challenges.

"I write today as the Chair of the City of Milwaukee's Public Safety and Health Committee to ask you to appoint a select committee to review this City's finances and make long-term recommendations to help restore its financial sustainability," Alderman Donovan states.

The letter from Alderman Donovan continues: "Yesterday morning, Mayor Tom Barrett presented a proposed 2018 executive budget that includes the elimination of nearly three dozen positions of police officer and more than six dozen fire fighters. This even as crimes of violence, fear, and disorder have increased to levels not seen in our community for many years."

In the letter Alderman Donovan cites rising health care and other benefit costs, costs of maintaining police department resources, a looming wave of retirements from police officers hired in the 1990s and the continued decline in real dollars of State Shared Revenue payments to the city as helping to fuel the fiscal crisis.

He writes: "Even if the Common Council were able to significantly increase its tax

levy to pay for more police officers — which it cannot — I'm not certain the heavily-burdened property tax payers of this community could bear much more."

-More-

Select Committee Request/ADD ONE

Alderman Donovan said he has also reached out to City Attorney Grant F. Langley (see attached letter) regarding the feasibility of a public safety fee to help cover the city's mounting public safety costs.

"I'm not exactly excited about (the possible new fee) but at this point I believe we have no choice but to look at it," he said, adding: "And by the way I'm not optimistic such a fee would pass legal muster."

Alderman Donovan said city experts are telling him that next year's city budget will be even worse. "We simply must act because we can't continue this downward spiral - it's not sustainable. What - are we just going to lay off more officers and fire fighters (next year)?"

The proposed formation of a state select committee will require a bipartisan approach that is a rare commodity of late in Madison, Alderman Donovan said.

"The elected leaders will need to end the partisan bickering and move toward solutions for Milwaukee - the economic engine that helps stir the drink for the entire state," he said.

"Our constituents - the good and decent people across Milwaukee - are the ones suffering and they are beyond frustrated with the fiscal crisis, increasing taxes and our public safety challenges," Alderman Donovan said.

"I'm hopeful a state select committee can help us find some fixes and stop the bleeding," he said.