

Milwaukee Ald. Donovan: The administration owes the residents of this city a public safety plan

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Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan

August 29, 2017

A year ago, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and Reggie Moore with the Office of Violence Prevention, both promised a public safety plan for the citizens of Milwaukee. Yet one year later, and \$1 million of grant money allocated, and we still have nothing to show for it except “pretty power points.”

Milwaukee is seeing growth in two areas — a growing investment in downtown, and a growing number of neighborhoods that are struggling with public safety. Our residents are facing a stubbornly high homicide rate, regular shootings, armed robberies, carjackings, street drugs, prostitution, reckless driving, and human trafficking. Even our teachers at Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) are being attacked in the classroom, making teacher retention difficult and robbing students of a safe learning environment. To compound the issue, morale among police officers is incredibly low, with response times and active policing falling short for various reasons including a shrinking force.

It's been nearly a year since the Milwaukee Common Council proposed a common sense public safety plan to establish order and safety across our city. After dismissing the Common Council's plan, Mayor Barrett indicated he would unveil a plan of his own in 2016 claiming,“(It) has been in the works for quite some time.” Still, Mayor Barrett has unveiled nothing and instead hired Reggie Moore with the Office of Violence Prevention at nearly \$100,000 a year to help the mayor develop a

plan. Yet, in another round of mixed messages, Moore was quoted as saying, “this isn’t the mayor’s plan.” However, even the webpage for the Office of Violence Prevention indicates they’d unveil a safety plan in June 2017, we’re still waiting. Moore’s office was also given a five-year \$5 million grant to address Milwaukee’s safety issues, yet the question remains — what do we have to show for it? The lack of leadership and follow through is forcing many families to deal with the serious challenges of unsafe neighborhoods, fueling the flight of middle class workers.

Recently, Mayor Barrett proposed a sales tax, which ironically was one of the recommendations of the Common Council’s public safety plan, an idea I supported for quite some time with the understanding it would be used to bring back hundreds of police officers cut over the last few years. However, the mayor simply wants to use the funding to maintain the status quo, which is clearly a failing endeavor.

It is time we saw a strategic plan laid out by Mayor Barrett and his administration, which demonstrates definitive plans on how to restore neighborhood safety, so our residents are convinced their neighborhoods are cared about as much as downtown is.

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Bill Arnold

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