ROBERT G. DONOVAN
ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

Wave of MPD retirements puts public safety at risk, new interim chief in difficult position

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
March 1, 2018

The number of police officer vacancies caused by retiring Milwaukee police officers has reached a crisis point for the city.

According to the Legislative Reference Bureau the MPD currently has 118 vacant sworn police officer positions, and there are 224 officers who are eligible to retire this year. Additionally, the recruit classes for new officers won't come close to making a dent in the vacancy rate.

The officer shortage has been building for years and I have called attention to it on numerous occasions, and it's been a problem much longer than the Barrett Administration cares to admit. Sadly, the crisis is also putting new interim Police Chief Alfonso Morales in a very difficult position in terms of implementing some of his very good ideas for the department.

I commend the new interim chief for some of his proposals to free up officers and get them out on the streets. However he'll be hard pressed to put his plans into action if we don't address the mass exodus of experienced officers who are choosing to retire.

While police officers are not the answer to all of our public safety challenges, who will respond to armed robbery calls, car thefts, reckless driving reports or – God forbid – shots fired calls involving innocent citizens?

This exodus is happening as part of the legacy of former Chief Flynn (and this administration) and the incredibly low morale among rank and file officers that has existed for years. The low morale is widespread across the department and is fueling the continued mass exodus when officers reach retirement eligibility.

It is time to get serious about filling our officer vacancies and I urge residents to contact Mayor Barrett at 414-286-2200 and demand that he do so.

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