

Amanda Avalos
Vice Chair
Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission
Re: FPC21420 - SOP 610, Towing of Vehicles
02.17.2022

What makes me the most hopeful is that so many people feel moved to come together to find solutions around an issue in Milwaukee. Reckless driving has increasingly become one of the city's most violent issues, almost as threatening as the deep neglect that some of our neighborhoods have been experiencing for decades. Since this proposed amendment to SOP 610 was introduced, members of the public have shown up to speak at meetings, have emailed us, and have been overall vocal about their concerns - I greatly appreciate their participation in this process. The issue of reckless driving is personal to everyone, including myself, who lives in or travels through Milwaukee.

But I will not let this moment continue without pointing out that this sense of urgency and energy for finding solutions cannot start and end with punitive measures. To put it simply, it will not fix our problem.

I do not think that this would be the solution that it is framed to be. Because of the racial and socioeconomic factors that range across different neighborhoods, the consequence of towing a vehicle would have disparate effects while not actually fixing the issue. It is with the same urgency that I feel that we need to find solutions that prevent issues like reckless driving from happening in the first place. What we have been doing is not working.

Crises in our city are the result of decades of divestment in resources and services. Every year during budget season we have a renewed opportunity to invest in the things that build sustainable, equitable, and strong communities. Public health, education, employment, transportation, access to clean food and water, and safe, affordable housing are among the most basic of conditions that we can choose to provide for people, and we have not yet made that a reality for everyone. When our communities have access to what they need to grow and thrive, we eliminate the stress and conditions that create issues like reckless driving. My dream for Milwaukee is that we start to challenge the way we approach these issues with solutions that invest in and build our communities. We will not solve this or other issues until we start to seriously assess the root causes and move forward in ways that are proven most effective. It was stated several times in our recent meetings by Commissioners, the public, and the Police Chief himself, "it is clear that this is a community issue, not a police issue." I do not believe this is the appropriate next step to solving this issue in Milwaukee.