

I am pleased to be with you here today to present the Milwaukee Police Department's 2006 budget and related plans.

Together, we are called upon to address many challenging community issues. Your decisions on these public policy issues have a profound impact on the quality of life for the citizens of our community.

Similarly, your decisions on the police department budget determine our ability to provide the services that sustain and enhance the quality of life throughout our community.

Together, we can address and resolve the public's concerns and issues. I thank you for the support you have given me since I became Chief and I wish to publicly thank all of the men and women who devote themselves to making Milwaukee safer. I would ask for your continuing support in the 2006 budget process.

The biggest concern voiced by the community has been the delay in response to calls for service, and response to quality of life complaints. The department has 269 vacancies as of 9/24/05. Because of this number of vacancies, MPD has not been able to respond quickly enough to satisfy the high expectations of Milwaukee's citizens. Our officers have become mainly reactive, because their time is committed to answering calls for service. With 269 vacancies, we are unable to do proactive policing.

This situation has developed because of the low number of recruit classes held in the last few years. We are not hiring enough officers to replace those leaving as a result of retirement and other reasons. MPD started and graduated only one class of 58 officers in 2003. In 2004, MPD started and graduated only one class of 59 officers. In May 2005, MPD graduated the November 2004 class of 58 officers. Another class will start around 11/7/05, but these officers won't be patrolling on their own until July of 2006.

Our recruits undergo 23 weeks of training at the academy and 12 weeks of training with an FTO. It takes 35 weeks to train an officer who can function on his/her own on the street.

The budget presented to you by the Mayor contains two recruit classes, one in May and one in November.

I believe that we desperately need to hold our two budgeted 2006 classes earlier in the year and try to squeeze in a third class in late 2006. We are proposing classes in February, June and October of 2006. By doing this, we will put approximately 60 fully functioning officers on the street next July and 60 in October. The officers in the other two 2006 classes will not be fully functional until February and June 2007. The department projects 83 more sworn vacancies in 2006 due to retirements and terminations. If we don't reverse the trend of fewer recruit classes, our vacancies will continue to increase and citizen satisfaction with our services will continue to decrease in 2006 and 2007.

MPD's efforts to open up to the community have raised citizen expectations. The creation of the civilian public affairs position, the assignment of community liaisons to the black and Hispanic communities, and the crime analysis meetings held at the districts have all improved community relations. This in turn has led to more calls for service and discussion of problems.

The Department revised its dispatch protocols to make homicides and other violent crimes a priority. This has greatly improved our response times to violent crime. However, because of the increased demands for services, our response times for quality of life calls has been poor. MPD does not have enough staff to deal with these calls. The fact that we can't provide timely response to quality of life calls has been a great source of citizen dissatisfaction.

Staff shortages have resulted in a decrease in the number of quality of life citations being issued.

The vacancies we have experienced made it impossible to provide the services expected by the citizens of Milwaukee. If this situation continues, MPD will have to make hard choices about further cutbacks in beat patrol, foot patrol, nuisance abatement, and licensed premises checks, among other functions. MPD may have to curtail sending officers to certain types of calls for service. Traffic enforcement patrols will not be done unless there is no backlog in calls for service. MPD doesn't want to do any of these cutbacks in service, but may be forced to do so if the number of vacancies continues to increase.

The Police Department's budget is 94% salaries. The remaining 6% covers all supplies, services, fuel, utilities, building maintenance, repair and equipment costs. The Department has continuously examined this area and done its best to reduce costs.

Since I took office, I have implemented a number of features to improve the department's effectiveness that I hope can continue in 2006.

Initiatives for 2006:

- 1) The Professional Performance Division has obtained funding and is in the process of procuring an early intervention system, which is a computer-based, proactive program, designed to identify and assist MPD employees who show symptoms of job stress, training deficiencies or personal problems that affect job performance.
  
- 2) The Milwaukee Commission on Police and Community Relations is expected to continue be a valuable resource for the MPD.
  
- 3) The two sergeants who were assigned as community liaison officers, and the civilian PIO are expected to continue their valuable work as ambassadors to the community.

4) Efforts to improve officer professionalism and their skills in dealing with the public will be continued through cultural competency training and verbal-judo training in 2006.

PROFESSIONAL  
COMMUNICATIONS

5) In conjunction with the DA's Office, Mayor's Office and Health Department, MPD has instituted a homicide review committee. This committee reviews homicides and attempts to identify societal factors that can be addressed to reduce further instances of homicide.

I again ask for your continuing support for 2006. MPD strives to meet the expectations of Milwaukee's citizens, but this is becoming increasingly difficult as officers leave and retire and their positions are not filled. The Department has made beneficial changes but these can't be sustained if officer vacancies increase.

