

INTERFAITH CONFERENCE

OF GREATER MILWAUKEE

Founded 1970

October 13, 2003

1442 N. Farwell Ave., Suite 200
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414/276-9050 • Fax 276-8442
email: ifcgm@aol.com
www.interfaithconference.org

American Baptist Churches of Wis.
The Rev. Dr. Arlo Reichter,
Executive Minister

Episcopal Church
The Milwaukee Diocese

Ev. Lutheran Church in America
Greater Milwaukee Synod
The Rev. Paul Stumme-Diers, Bishop

Milwaukee Jewish Council for
Community Relations &
Milwaukee Jewish Federation
Paula Simon, Executive Director

Wisconsin Council of Rabbis
Rabbi David B. Cohen, President

Presbyterian Church (USA)
Presbytery of Milwaukee
The Rev. Phillip C. Brown,
Executive Presbyter

Religious Society of Friends
The Milwaukee Meeting
George Owen, Clerk

Wis. Gen. Baptist State Conv.
The Rev. Joe Games, President

Unitarian Universalist Churches
The S.E. Wisconsin Association
Janet Nortrom, Representative

Roman Catholic Church
The Milwaukee Archdiocese
The Most Rev. Timothy M. Dolan,
Archbishop

United Church of Christ
The S.E. Wisconsin Association
The Rev. Dr. Tom O. Bentz,
Association Minister

United Methodist Church
Metro North District
The Rev. Dr. Velma Smith,
District Superintendent

Metro South District
The Rev. Dan Schwerin,
District Superintendent

OFFICERS
The Rev. Dr. Tom O. Bentz,
Chair

Paula Simon,
Secretary

The Rev. Anita Braden,
Treasurer

Don Austin,
Executive Committee

Celia Jackson,
Executive Committee

Nancy Theoharis,
Executive Committee

STAFF
Mr. Marcus White,
Executive Director

STATEMENT BY THE INTERFAITH CONFERENCE OF GREATER MILWAUKEE

Contact: Heidi Rattner
Director of Justice Programs
(414) 276-9050

The Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee strongly opposes the closing of Villard Library, a branch that serves an average of 10,000 patrons a month. We also object to the trimming of hours at six other libraries in the City of Milwaukee.

Public libraries are an invaluable community resource. They serve as places for citizens to access knowledge and develop research skills. They provide children with safe spaces to study, as well as to explore their powers of imagination. Libraries promote the gathering of citizens in non-commercial spaces for educational and cultural activities.

Our newspapers are filled with stories about how students in many countries consistently outperform U.S. students in various academic areas. Since more than 8,000 children (many from families with limited incomes) live within a mile of the Villard library, how can we remove one of their few opportunities for advancement?

In response to the disappearance of manufacturing jobs, citizens are told that in order to achieve economic success, they must develop their mental capital. Libraries provide people from varying economic and cultural backgrounds with access to new technology and critical resources. Where will the people obtain these opportunities if they no longer have a library that is accessible to them?

The Interfaith Conference recommends that the library's Board of Trustees seek greater community involvement in its decision making processes. Perhaps private sources of funding may be uncovered; perhaps citizens would be willing to pay nominal sums for certain materials. Many issues should be explored before undertaking the drastic measure of closing a library and cutting services to others.

The Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee is the interfaith agency established by eleven religious judicatories to address the social issues affecting the quality of life in the Greater Milwaukee area. The mission of the Conference is based on the religious values of the dignity of every person and the solidarity of the human community.

"To uphold the dignity of every person and the solidarity of the human community"

City of Milwaukee Forestry- **What are we all about?**

1. **We assure public safety**
2. **Our work enhances property values.**
3. **We make the city a more livable place to reside and do business.**
 - a. **our work improves the physical environment of the city and the quality of life for its citizens**
 - b. **our work enhances the business environment and encourages investment in the community.**
4. **Our work preserves the city's investments in its infrastructure**
5. **Our work contributes to the civic image of ourselves as 'Milwaukeeans'**

A Brief on What Forestry Employees Do-

1. We are **responsible for the street tree system** consisting of over 200,000 trees **worth approximately half a billion dollars.** We plant, prune, and remove street trees. We inspect trees for potential hazards and conflicts and correct any dangerous conditions we encounter. We monitor tree health and provide least risk pest management as required. We respond to all storm damage situations that occur in the system and many on private property. We are 'on call' 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.
2. We are **responsible for the city's Boulevard system** consisting of about 124 linear miles of landscaped medians.
 - *The system is irrigated by a concealed irrigation system worth tens of millions of dollars. We install and maintain the irrigation system to protect our investment. We water to keep plants healthy and to preserve the investment in the city's plant material –in other words we water to keep the system alive.
 - *Like most property owners, we mow the grass once per week. We do not rake or collect grass clippings, rather we return them to the soil to break down.
 - *We design our own landscapes utilizing turf, hardscape surfaces, annual and perennial flowerbeds, shrubs, and trees. The types and arrangement of the material are selected based on a number of different criteria including among others: the harshness of the site, the abutting land uses, and the hardiness, form or color of the material.
 - *We grow most of the landscape plants at our Municipal Nursery. We harvest them, plant, maintain them throughout their lifetimes, and finally remove them when they die.

-over-

3. We are responsible for the **maintenance of the grounds surrounding the city hall complex, the civic center plaza and various other public buildings.**
4. We represent **60% of the front line snow and ice control salting/plowing drivers** (105 of 180 drivers). In addition, we are responsible for snow and ice on city parking lots, on city pedways, at the civic center and abutting tot-lots and play fields.
5. Fellow employees handle almost **10,000 service requests** annually from the public. Most of these relate to matters on private property regarding code enforcement.
6. We are responsible for the **enforcement of city codes** relative to hazardous trees, alley encroachments, and tall weed problems on private property.
7. Other items of responsibility include:
 - a. Forestry mows the turf and provides landscape management services on all **Milwaukee Water Works properties.**
 - b. Forestry provides all landscape management activities and trash removal on all city **tot-lots and play fields.**
 - c. Forestry crews mow the city's many miles of **drainage channels.**
 - d. Forestry crews provide all landscape management, debris removal and snow removal for the **municipal parking lots.**
 - e. Forestry employees maintain and repair all Forestry equipment. Additionally, we **maintain and repair small engine equipment for most other city agencies.**
 - f. Forestry employees grow most of the plants we use at the Municipal Nursery. We also produce trees and flowers for sale to many other local municipalities and public agencies.

ARE LIBRARIES CLOSING?

Budget problems are squeezing neighborhood libraries



STAFF CUTS

24 library positions may be eliminated

FEWER BOOKS

\$130,000 may be cut from materials

SHORTER HOURS

6 libraries are closed Fridays 'til Dec 20

LIBRARY CLOSINGS

Villard Library possibly closed in 2004

IT'S TIME TO HELP EAST NOW.

Call or write to tell them you want all of the libraries open and funded.

Michael D'Amato - 3rd
Your Alderman
286-2221
City Hall Rm. 205
200 E. Wells St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202
mdamat@milwaukee.gov

John Norquist
Mayor
286-2200
City Hall Rm. 201
200 E. Wells St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202
jnorqu@milwaukee.gov

Marvin Pratt - 1st
Council President
286-2221
City Hall Rm. 205
200 E. Wells St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202
mpratt@milwaukee.gov

ATTEND THE MEETINGS

Monday, Oct 13 at 6:30PM

Public Budget Hearing
City Hall - Council Chambers
200 E. Wells St.

Friday, Oct 17 at 9AM

Common Council Budget Meeting
City Hall - Room 301B

For more information, contact:

Rita Qureshi 461-0161
villardlibrary@yahoo.com

Sponsored by the Friends of Villard Library

Public Hearing Statement

City of Milwaukee Proposed 2004 Budget

By the Public Policy Forum

Jeffrey C. Browne, President
Emily Van Dunk, Research Director
Amy Schwabe, Researcher

October 13, 2003

The mayor's 2004 proposed budget decreases the property tax levy \$55. The property tax rate declines from \$10.15 to \$9.62. There are no rate increases in the city's major user fees. However, a significant increase in estimated water consumption increases what an average family is estimated to pay in sewer maintenance fees. When average property value increases are taken into consideration, the owner of a house valued at almost \$103,000 will pay \$35 more for city services in 2004 than was estimated in 2003.

Payment by owner of \$70,000 home for services: 1997-2004								
	1997	1998	1999*	2000	2001**	2002	2003***	2004 Proposed****
Home Value	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$75,250	\$75,250	\$84,280	\$84,280	\$96,079	\$102,805
Tax Rate	\$10.24	\$9.99	\$9.71	\$9.69	\$10.49	\$10.87	\$10.15	\$9.62
Taxes	\$716.80	\$699.30	\$730.68	\$729.17	\$884.10	\$916.12	\$975.20	\$988.98
Sewer Maintenance Fee	\$0.00	\$24.78	\$29.76	\$48.44	\$54.89	\$76.63	\$85.20	\$106.52
Solid Waste Fee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$44.00	\$75.00	\$75.00	\$75.00
Snow and Ice Control Fee	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$8.21	\$8.21	\$8.21
Household Payment	\$717	\$724	\$760	\$778	\$983	\$1,076	\$1,144	\$1,179

* With 7.5% Property Value Increase from 1998

** With 12% Property Value Increase from 2000

***With 14% Property Value Increase from 2002

****With 7% Property Value Increase from 2003

The Public Policy Forum's concerns are not so much with anything new in this year's proposed budget. In fact, some of the new initiatives included seem to be good ideas, such as the plan to implement a formal capital project monitoring system in order to ensure that projects are completed on time and on budget. Such a system is an especially good idea when cost overruns in such major projects as the Police Department's Third District Station/ Communication and Data Center are considered. Other proposals, while painful, make fiscal sense in tight budget situations, such as closing Villard Library especially since the library has relatively low patron utilization and is in close proximity to other library branches.

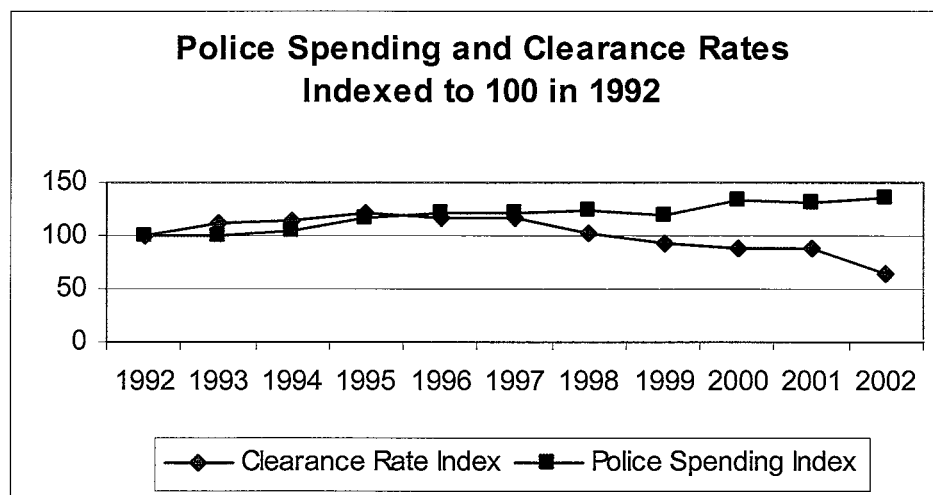
The Forum's major concerns are with some things we have noted in the past that continue to manifest themselves in the current budget. In fact, we are concerned that some disturbing trends are becoming more apparent.

The Police Department

Outcome Measures

The Police Department, which is budgeted to spend more than any other general city purposes department, is a major fiscal concern for several reasons. First, it has consistently grown over the last several years while other departments have experienced cuts. In fact, that was the stated policy of the city for several years. For example, the 2003 budget stated that the city's commitment to decreasing crime caused public officials to add authority for 299 sworn police officer positions between 1988 and 2003, while 1,042 positions were cut in the city's remaining departments. Unfortunately, this financial commitment to the Police Department throughout several budgets (including this one, which, although vacant police officer positions are cut, increases the department's budgeted spending almost \$10 million) has not had the results on crime that have been projected in the budgets.

When the city instituted outcome-based budgeting, it stated its purpose in doing so very clearly: "Outcome-based budgeting represents a very simple idea: a city should provide resources only to those programs that add value and the determination of a program's success should depend on actual performance. In other words, when the city funds a program it expects successful results; any other outcome indicates the unnecessary expenditure of taxpayer dollars." Over the past ten years, the city has not implemented its outcome-based budgeting principles with regard to the Police Department. On the contrary, spending increases have occurred despite the fact that the department's effectiveness at clearing crimes – one of the department's key outcome indicators – has dropped dramatically. For example, as is illustrated in the following chart, the department's spending has increased 35% from 1992 while its clearance rate has decreased 36%.



Another outcome measure that the Police Department monitored for several years was the number of index crimes per 1,000 people committed relative to those committed in peer cities. Milwaukee's goal was to be the safest city of its size by 1997. However, by 1997 the city was the sixth safest, which represented a decline from third in 1993. In 1998, the city was the seventh safest, and the next year the Police Department's performance measure was changed from relative safety in the nation to just monitoring changes in the violent crime rate for Milwaukee. Although the city's reasoning for changing the measure is plausible, there was no acknowledgement that the Police Department failed to meet its previous goal or any correlated change in budgeting to address the Police Department's missed goal.

Budgeting Problems

Another disturbing trend in the Police Department that is not adequately addressed in this budget is the department's inability to remain within its budgeted spending. This is evidenced by the likelihood that, mostly due to overtime spending, the Police Department in 2003 is projected to spend roughly \$9 million more than its salary budget allows. This deficit is more than the 2004 budgets for every department with the exceptions of Fire, Health, the Library, Neighborhood Services, Police, and Public Works. This is especially striking since some of the departments with smaller budgets than the Police Department's projected 2003 shortfall, such as the Municipal Court and the Assessor's Office, have shown an impressive ability to not only remain within their budgets but also to create efficiencies that allow their budgets to be cut. The projected shortfall also exceeds the \$5 million appropriation for contingencies in 2003, which has caused the Budget Office to introduce a resolution to the Common Council's Finance Committee requesting authority to borrow to cover the deficit. Although the Common Council, especially the Finance Committee, has not ignored this problem, it has been ineffective in solving it. Further, the Police Department's inability to stay within its budget is not addressed in the department's proposed 2004 budget, suggesting that it may continue to be a problem next year.

Inaccurate Budgeting

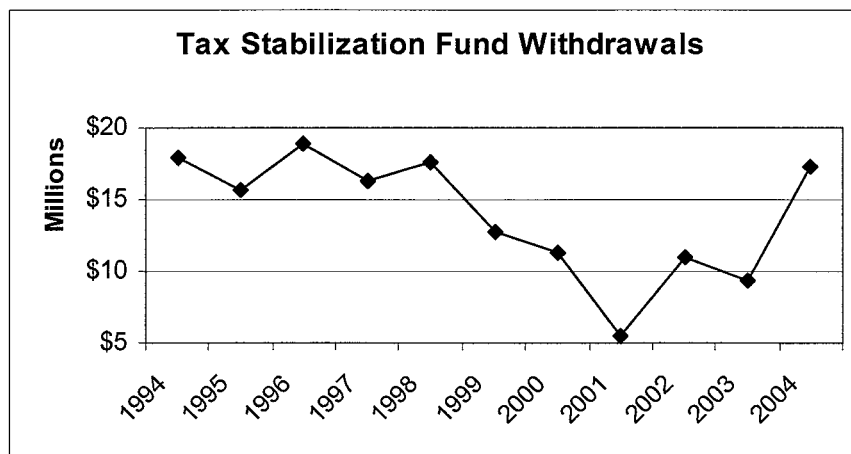
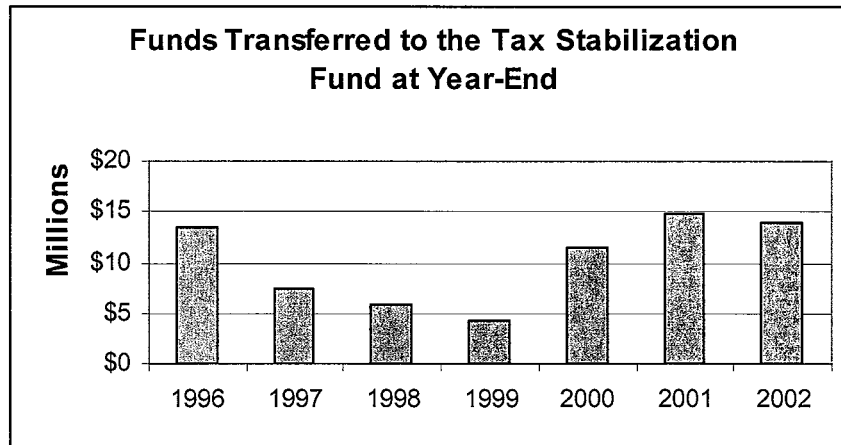
Another disturbing trend continued in this budget relates to the Police Department's budgeting problems and deals directly with the Common Council Contingent Fund and the Tax Stabilization Fund (TSF).

Tax Stabilization Fund

The Tax Stabilization Fund is where any surpluses in city departments are placed at the end of the year. It is considered a reserve fund, and the Common Council is allowed to make a transfer from the fund every year in order to stabilize taxes. A determination of how much money should be in the TSF must be balanced by two legitimate concerns. The balance should not be too high because that would mean that too much revenue was budgeted, and that citizens had possibly been taxed too much. However, the fund should

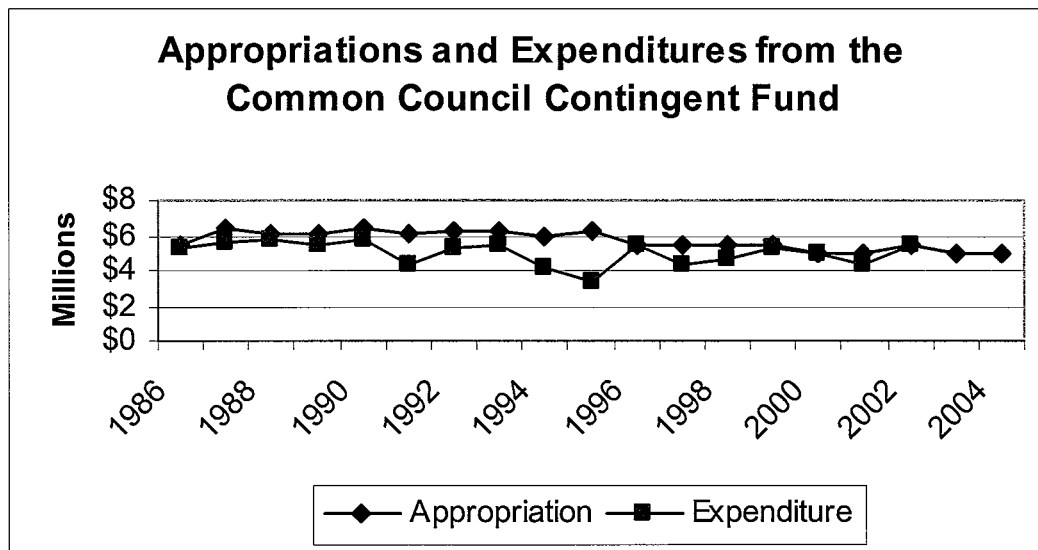
also not be depleted too much because the government should have a rainy day fund. The city addressed this need to balance in the 2002 budget wherein a policy was proposed that would establish a minimum balance in the TSF of 5% of the city's three-year average general fund expenditures and a maximum of 10%. However, the city now seems to be focused on ensuring that the TSF balance does not get too low, as the TSF write-up in the 2004 proposed budget notes the 5% minimum policy without mention of the 10% maximum.

The lack of focus on a maximum balance policy is especially cause for concern since almost \$14 million was placed into the fund at the end of 2002, raising concerns regarding the accuracy of the city's budgeting that year. Because the city had such a large balance, it was able to budget a large withdrawal in 2004, \$17.3 million, an increase of \$8 million over 2003's withdrawal, and 51.1% of the available fund balance. The ability to withdraw such a large amount is a key reason the city is able to keep the tax levy flat in 2004; however, it also raises questions about the accuracy of budgeting in 2002.



Common Council Contingent Fund

Another fiscal concern in this budget is the Common Council contingent fund. Every year, the budget includes an amount of money budgeted to use in case of emergencies or unanticipated costs. Three-quarters of the Common Council must approve any expenditure from this fund, and expenditures are supposed to meet one of the following three criteria: emergency circumstances, obligatory circumstances, or fiscal advantage and/ or compliance with fiscal management principles. The proposed budget, just as in 2003, places \$5 million in this fund. It is questionable whether this is a substantial enough appropriation since in recent years expenditures from the contingent fund have increased. Additionally, in 1996, 2000, and 2002, the entire contingent fund appropriation was used. The chart below tracks appropriations and expenditures from the fund over the last several years and shows that while in recent years expenditures have increased, appropriations have decreased.



Also, the city does not have enough in the contingent fund in 2003 to cover the expected budget overrun in the police department due to excessive overtime costs. We are not suggesting that the contingent fund appropriation should necessarily be increased. However, growing use of this fund, as well as unexpected spending that exceeds the appropriation, is another sign that the city is having problems with accurate budgeting.

Finally, questions need to be asked about the way in which the Common Council uses the contingent fund during the year. In recent weeks, the Council voted to reserve some of the 2003 appropriation to keep Villard Library open through December of 2003. The library had been slated to close because of low patron utilization and fiscal concerns. In the 2004 budget the library is again slated to be closed. It is not at all clear that keeping a library open for a few more months meets any of the stated requirements for use of the contingent fund, or even if it does, that this is a wise use of the fund.

Grant Funding

It should be noted that the city's use of grant funding needs to be monitored, and perhaps a citywide policy implemented regarding how departments determine whether such one-time revenue should be used to cover costs. It is always dangerous to fund ongoing costs with one-time revenues, and grants are often one-time revenues. This problem is obvious in the Police Department's budget. As a result of several federal grants in the mid-1990s, the Police Department was able to add officers. However, as these grants have expired, many of the positions have been added to the tax levy. If a position is important enough to last longer than the term of a grant or other one-time revenue, it might be a good idea to also fund that position with ongoing revenue in order that the ongoing budget can be kept in balance without having to constantly look for new sources of revenue.

This problem continues to manifest itself in this year's budget as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds continue to go to pay for city department programs that used to be tax-levy funded. Some notable examples are the Bookmobile and some overtime costs in the Police Department. Funding such programs with CDBG funds raises not only the question of whether CDBG dollars, which traditionally fund community based organizations, should appropriately be spent by city departments, but also raises the possibility that these programs could run into the same dilemma as the Police Department did. Specifically, if CDBG funding is decreased or if city services are no longer able to be funded by these grants, what is the city going to do? If the city determines that these programs are important enough to not be cut, maybe they should have been financed with more reliable revenue all along.