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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Jim Bohl
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Alderman Seeks To Block Surveillance Camera Funding

Ald. Jim Bohl Says He'll Also Seek Legal Opinion on Administrative Payment

Ald. Jim Bohl will introduce a Common Council resolution that seeks to block the reappropriation of more than \$600,000 in city operating funds to pay for 15 pole-mounted video surveillance cameras.

If approved, the resolution would suspend the expenditure of funds from the Milwaukee Police Department and Department of Public Works for the camera project, said Ald. Bohl, who strongly condemns the decision to pay for the cameras administratively without oversight and input from the Common Council.

"I strongly disagree with the policy decision that was made to pay for such an expensive video surveillance system from funds that were diverted from the police department and the Department of Public Works," he said.

"It's not good public policy when you thwart the role of the Common Council — the legislative body elected by the people to oversee important financial and policy matters in the City of Milwaukee," the alderman said. "Denying myself and other Council members an opportunity to ask serious questions about a camera system that I'm not sold on is to me questionable at best and at worst an expensive and misleading boondoggle for the taxpayers."

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Move To Block Camera Funding/ADD ONE

The alderman said he also plans to ask the City Attorney's Office for an opinion on the legality of such an administrative payment without Council approval.

Ald. Bohl said the Council was initially led to believe the cameras would be paid for almost entirely with federal grant funding. When that turned out not to be the case all eyes were shifted to the MPD and DPW, which "miraculously" found the money to pay for the cameras, he said.

"I'm worried that this is really a shell game, that the money will be diverted from vital DPW and police operations, and that both departments will be back in front of us asking for additional money to cover the areas where the (cameras) money came from," Ald. Bohl said. "I also find it ironic that DPW just came to the Council requesting \$1 million in contingency funds to cover excessive snow removal and salting operation costs and now, somehow, DPW has pots of money to afford cameras. This doesn't make sense."

Ald. Bohl said he expects Council members to seek answers from MPD and DPW officials on where exactly the money for the surveillance cameras came from and how their operations will be affected.

No matter what, diverting resources from both departments will likely ultimately impact other city services, leaving the Common Council to pick up the pieces, the alderman said. "All of this for cameras that may or may not help decrease crime and that may or may not push criminal activity somewhere else, where no cameras are watching," he said.