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- Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee

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- Zoning, Neighborhoods & Development Committee



TONY ZIELINSKI
ALDERMAN, 14TH DISTRICT

April 6, 2009

The Honorable Common Council**Honorable Members:**

Recently, incidents of graffiti are increasingly a cause of blight in the City of Milwaukee. In the first 3 months of 2009, there has been a total of 1,941 graffiti incidents reported to the Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS) hotline. This is an increase of 65% from the 1,176 reports made during the same time period in 2008. In March 2009 alone, there were 704 reports. There is no reason to believe that these rates will not continue throughout the year. This would be the worst year for graffiti that the city has ever experienced.

In 2008, there were 4,862 graffiti incidents reported to the Anti-Graffiti Hotline. The Department of Neighborhood Services immediately sends a letter to the owner of the property requesting that he or she remove the graffiti in a timely fashion. The amount of time varies but is generally 3 days. Exceptions would be if there was profanity in the graffiti; then DNS would request abatement within 24 hours or during frigid weather it may request abatement within 7 to 14 days. However, due to the staffing level in the graffiti abatement program, staff is not likely to be able to check to see if the graffiti has been abated for approximately 2 weeks. Presently, DNS has one full-time Special Enforcement Inspector and a Program Inspector Assistant who works 5 hours per week.

The department does not have actual numbers on compliance but estimates compliance after receiving a letter to be 80%, or 20% requiring a formal order for abatement. For 2008, this would have been approximately 972 cases requiring orders. Once an order is issued, the department also estimates an 80% compliance rate. The remaining 20% would be abated by the city and the costs charged to the property owner. In addition, a \$50 reinspection fee would be charged. In 2008, approximately 195 cases failed to be abated by the owner and were therefore removed by the city with costs charged to the owner. According to DNS, in 2008, there was a total of \$7,550 collected for reinspection fees, \$23,824 in reimbursement for abatement costs and \$1,449 in restitution costs paid to the city.

Given the substantial increase in graffiti incidences and the present lack of staffing to address graffiti in the Department of Neighborhood Services, I wish to provide DNS with the needed resources. I am therefore suggesting the addition of 2 Code Enforcement Inspectors and one Graffiti Program Manager. This staff would be largely out in the field

identifying incidents of graffiti, sending out notices, returning after 7 days to check on the status of abatement, writing orders if needed and returning again after 10 days to check again on the status of abatement. If the graffiti is not abated at that point, the city will contract for abatement and charge the property owner. I would also ask that a sum of \$50,000 be appropriated from the Common Council Contingent Fund to a special fund assigned to the Department of Neighborhood Services to cover the costs of abatement.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Zieliski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tony" being particularly prominent.

Ald. Tony Zieliski
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MET

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