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ROBERT G. DONOVAN

Alderman, 8th District

January 16, 2007

Superintendent Andrekopoulos
Milwaukee Public Schools
5225 West Vliet Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208

Dear Superintendent Andrekopoulos:

Let me begin by applauding the decision to crack down on cell phones in Milwaukee Public Schools. This along with District Attorney Chisolm's commitment to consider criminal charges against certain offenders at schools is most certainly a step in the right direction, sadly though just one-step, I might add long overdue. Since the devil is always in the details, I can assure you I will be closely monitoring the success or failure of this initiative.

Back in late October, I along with several other aldermen and the Milwaukee Police Association offered what I felt was a modest common sense approach to deal with the increasing violence and disorder in many Milwaukee Public Schools.

If you recall MPS had already agreed to expend an additional one million dollars over and above their current safety budget to enhance school security. Given the demands on MPD from MPS we felt it only appropriate that the lion's share of that taxpayer money be utilized to hire additional police officers.

Once properly trained they could be assigned to your more challenged schools yet in the summer months with school closed they would be available for regular police duties at a time when demands for police service increase dramatically.

Following our proposal, a meeting ensued between yourself, Mayor Barrett, and Police Chief Hegerty. As a result of that meeting and subsequent follow up an intergovernmental agreement between MPS and the City outlining a pilot project involving the assignment of the police to several MPS schools was developed. This agreement has been assigned to the Public Safety Committee for further review. Keeping in mind this agreement has little or nothing in common with what was originally called for, consider with me the following points:

1. Recently this community experienced a near riot at Bradley Technical High School, once considered a jewel in the MPS System.
2. Last school year calls for police service from MPS exceeded the 11,000 mark.
3. Almost daily reports of violence and disorder at other MPS schools.
4. Continued threats and even physical attacks on teachers.
5. Milwaukee Police already assign 16 officers daily (school squads) to do nothing but deal with school issues.
6. 43% of police calls for service on the 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift are generated by MPS.
7. Late last year a previous intergovernmental agreement assigned numerous additional officers daily to monitor activity at several schools at the end of the school day.
8. MPS continues to employ-at taxpayer expense-approximately 250 security aides for our schools. "A figure much higher than the entire Racine, WI police department".

You add to this disturbing mix the reality that on any given day tens of thousands of students are truant, many of whom are engaged in criminal activity. There is an abysmal drop out and graduation rate and a business community clamoring for an educated, employable work force and not getting it.

While I'm certain you can point to successes, most especially at the grade school level, quite frankly I think that anyone would be hard pressed to deny that large segments of MPS are in crisis.

However what is most disturbing to me is the continued penchant on the part of MPS and sadly others to downplay, even minimize these problems. One could argue it's an attempt to mislead the general public. Given the volumes of calls from citizens, police officers, and even your own teachers, I'm here to tell you a crisis does exist and most citizens already know it. What they are demanding is honesty of their public officials and a strategy to turn this crisis around. The decent students and teachers, indeed this entire community, deserve nothing less.

While I have no doubt many of the challenges that MPS is forced to deal with are the results of a societal decay, I need not remind you that in seeking and attaining your position, you assumed the responsibility of leading MPS to success through bold, innovative and decisive leadership.

I'm certain I speak not only for myself but other elected officials and the entire community when I say we stand committed to helping in whatever way we can to ensure MPS success.

I however, cannot in good conscience continue to ignore the increasing demands from MPS on our limited police resources, a continued drain on the already overburdened property tax payers and shall I say questionable results coming out of MPS on a variety of other issues all this and more warrant closer public scrutiny.

Therefore, I am inviting you and the entire school board to a special Public Safety Committee meeting on February 1, 2007, at 1:30 p.m., to address not only this proposed pilot project, but to afford you the opportunity to outline your strategy to restore MPS to its former status.

I'm certain you agree with me when I say the success of MPS is absolutely critical to Milwaukee's future.

If you, however, feel my request for your appearance is too demanding, the facts I've stated inaccurate, or the tone of this letter unfairly harsh, I stand ready to be corrected.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Donovan
Alderman, 8th District
Chairman, Public Safety Committee

Jim Bohl
Alderman, 5th District

Joe Dudzik
Alderman 9th District

RGD:so