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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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November 2, 2005

Ald. Mike McGee, Jr.  
(414) 286-2221

## Budget Proposal Would Help City Expand Pool Of Skilled Workers

*Ald. McGee's Amendment Would Provide Funding For Residents Interested in Skilled Trades; Public Works Projects Would Benefit*

In an effort to help expand the city's pool of skilled workers and to help more city residents access good paying jobs on major projects, Ald. Mike McGee, Jr. is proposing a unique amendment to the 2006 city budget.

The amendment, to be taken up by the Common Council's Finance & Personnel Committee, seeks \$150,000 in borrowing authority for a new capital improvements account to fund a job-training program in specific skilled trades. Up to 80 participants would have access to classes, training and certificate programs in several skilled trades, including sewer and water work, environmental remediation and utility construction. The program would be operated by Big Step and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership.

Ald. McGee said a large majority of city residents lack training in skilled trades and are frozen out of good-paying jobs on major public works and construction projects. "This initiative will enable Milwaukee residents to acquire the skills needed to become gainfully employed on public works projects, in fields of construction or public utilities, or in other industries requiring specific technical skills," said Ald. McGee.

"With the right kind of training and opportunities, people can change their lives and strive for something better, and that can only positively impact our neighborhoods and the community," he said.

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## **McGee Offers Job Training Amendment/ADD ONE**

The amendment sponsored by Ald. McGee is unique in that it is the first time in city history that a Common Council member has proposed using the capital improvements budget to primarily fund a job training initiative. Typical capital improvements budget items pay for renovations and repairs, new construction projects and equipment purchases, and sometimes feature a built in job training component. According to documents provided by Ald. McGee, the program would also include job placement and retention help for participants.

Big Step and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership is filling a niche in the training of people looking to enter the skilled trades and industries in the Milwaukee area. According to its web site, the Big Step/WRTP Center of Excellence helped more than 300 community residents pass apprenticeship exams between 2000 and 2004, and of the nearly 150 residents placed into laborer, utility and other construction jobs in 2004, the average starting wage was nearly \$16 an hour plus benefits.

The program could help mold a more skilled and diverse workforce that can serve the city into the future, Ald. McGee said. “We have thousands of skilled workers retiring and preparing to retire, and we need to try to find people willing to step up and fill the void,” he said.

“But, more importantly, we need to provide a highly skilled and diverse pool of workers if we are going to fuel regional economic growth and prosper as a regional center of commerce and industry,” said Ald. McGee.

The program would be paid for using general obligation bonds or notes, and it would be administered by the city’s Department of Administration. The program would have a total 2006 budget impact of \$151,188 – including \$3,688 for debt service (interest). Because only the debt service is placed on the property tax levy, the tax rate impact of the amendment is negligible.

The Finance & Personnel Committee will meet at 9 a.m. in room 301-B of City Hall tomorrow (Thursday, November 3) and Friday to consider 2006 budget amendments. The council will meet November 11 to adopt a final budget.