

Members of the Steering and Rules Committee,

As Khalil said we have been marching in the streets for the past 144 days. During this time we have been met with tear gas, rubber bullets, and pepper spray from city, county, state, and federal paramilitary officers. We have been met by surplus military equipment and attacked with chemical weapons banned in warfare. In response to the absurd use of force at the end of May and beginning of June, the Milwaukee Police and Fire Commission demoted Chief Morales. However, the recent events in Wauwatosa show that Chief Morales was not the problem. MPD supported the Wauwatosa Police Department's brutal repression of protesters first amendment rights. A new chief will not fix the rot in the Milwaukee Police Department.

Mayor Barrett's tone deaf and insulting .15% cut in the MPD budget will not fix the rot in the Milwaukee Police Department. The City of Milwaukee must divest at least 75 million dollars from the Milwaukee Police Department. MPD does not create a sense of safety in many Milwaukee communities. Over the past decade 62 cents out of every new dollar spent has went to MPD. The militarization, training, and casual racism within the department has turned MPD into a paramilitary organization that is nothing more than an occupying force. This occupying force targets communities of color with overly aggressive policing, violence, and a presumption of guilt while treating primarily white neighborhoods with respect and the presumption of innocence. This disparate treatment can be witnessed simply by crossing Holton.

The Common Council must commit to demilitarizing the Milwaukee Police Department. The first step is banning the use of the federal 1033 program. The surplus military equipment provided by this program is being used to terrorize the citizens of Milwaukee. There is no situation where MPD needs to confront it's citizens with armored vehicles designed to withstand IEDs in Fallujah. The citizens of Milwaukee are not enemy combatants and they must stop being treated as such. Not only must MPD immediately cease the 1033 program, the Common Council must also make MPD divest itself from the currently owned surplus military equipment.

We know that crime is increasing in Milwaukee. But we also know that is only because we are in desperate time. We are in a once in a century public health crisis. People are out of work. People are scared. People are desperate. A 75 million dollar investment in poverty-stricken communities will go a long way to curbing that desperation. For too long, Milwaukee has been attempting to fight crime with a reactive investment in policing. Police do not stop crime—they rarely even solve it. Instead of criminalizing poverty, the city needs to be investing in those communities that need it most. You need to be investing in programs that will decrease wealth inequality between white communities and communities of color. You need to be investing in programs that will allow Black and brown folks to begin building generational wealth. You need to be investing in programs that will lessen the health care disparity between races. You need to immediately fix lead pipes in all neighborhoods. You need to be investing in education. Right now, middle class people with school age children are fleeing the city due to the poor schools. Investing in the health and safety of Milwaukee communities will do more to stop crime than continuing to fund a failed, racist police department.

All police misconduct and brutality complaints must be investigated by an independent 3rd party. During a protest earlier in the summer, a drunk off-duty MPD officer attacked a member of The Peoples Revolution while we were marching down Old World Third. This assault was subsequently “investigated” by members of his own department. He has faced no consequences for his criminal behavior. There is no such thing as a fair and thorough investigation when an organization has little to no outside oversight.

The Police Association contracts must be renegotiated to remove officer misconduct protections. It is an egregious mistake on the part of the city to agree to protect officers who commit regular misconduct. You must also overhaul the public records process to accommodate affordable, equitably addressed, timely responses to requests by the public for public records. You must also collect, maintain, and publish demographic data for all police-community encounters.

Being a police officer is a stressful job. Not everyone handles stress in a positive, safe, or healthy manner. There must be ongoing mental health evaluations, support, and resources to ensure every single officer has the mental fitness to serve.

The Milwaukee Police Department must treat all citizens ethically. There must be a complete ban of actions by officers that restrict breathing or circulation(including but not limited to choke-holds) as well as a complete ban on “No-knock Warrants”.

MPD must institute a policy requiring the use of continuously recording body cameras. This video must be easily and equitably accessible to members of the public. The police can no longer be the only ones who can see and release body cam footage. They have shown they cannot be trusted to release true and in-context video of police misconduct.

MPD must immediately issue a De-Escalation mandate and institute a continuous deescalation training program for all officers. De-escalation must be the default position of police in all community interactions and be supported by rigorous, regular, and regimented training.

All officers must have at least a 4 year degree from an accredited college or university in the field of criminal justice, political science, sociology, Africology, American Indian Studies, Asian-American Studies, or Latinx Studies.

There must be financial incentives for residency. We know that state law prohibits a residency mandate, but the city can institute a system of financial incentives to be put in place to encourage police officers to live in the communities they serve.

Finally, in theory, Milwaukee has one of the most powerful civilian accountability boards in the entire country. However, due to either malfeasance or incompetence Mayor Barrett has allowed it to crumble. The Common Council must immediately request Mayor Barrett nominate an Executive Director who will appropriately staff the FPC. In addition, the Common Council must insist that Mayor Barrett fills all open seats on the Commission. These open seats must be filled by members of the community who have personal or familial experience with police brutality and have witnessed first hand the lack of accountability in the police department. There is a member of the FPC who was a 24 year veteran of MPD and has a son who is an officer. It is only appropriate to have someone with direct experience from the other side to balance the attempted regulatory capture by the Police Association.

These demands are simply the first step to reforming the city we call home. These are all things that the Common Council can initiate today. You can send back the Mayor's insulting budget proposal and make him start from scratch. This city is at a crossroads. And you are in a unique position to dictate which direction we take. So now you have a choice. Do we continue down this road of inequity, oppression, and violence? Or do we chart another path?

Thank You