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To: [All Alders](#)
Cc: [Patterson, John](#)
Subject: 2026 Budget Optics
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Dear Alders,

The mayor's 2026 Executive Budget is out. She gives the Fire Department their requested 10th ambulance, which is great for the city. We needed that. She talks about the volume of increasing calls with the growth of the city, adding about 5,000 residents PER YEAR, and that trend is expected to continue through 2030. She mentioned the stress on firefighters and medics and her concern for their well-being, retention, and recruitment efforts.

The mayor says there are too many times over the course of the year when every ambulance is out on a call and you get that one more call, there isn't an ambulance to go to it. She mentions the call volume and the pace of the calls are difficult for the paramedics. "They are just working flat out." She wants to prevent burnout among paramedics and also recruit more. She's concerned about maintaining the workforce that we need.

I wonder if she ever talks with police officers. Just yesterday, 12 of their 24 hours were spent on priority calls only, starting about 5 p.m. Significant calls came in around our city and were not responded to because they only had staffing to respond to the very most serious calls. There are many times you could call for police services and not get them. There are times when every single officer is on a critical call and we need to call for mutual aid outside of our city. There are officers working a lot of overtime just to maintain minimum staffing levels, and there is very little traffic enforcement in our city, despite the fact that it's the number one complaint the police department and alders receive.

Then officers are not added, but reallocated to serve our growing homeless population in the north and central district. Along with an officer to work in peer support and officer well-being (a very critical need), and one to specialize in our growing need for emergency management. Special events are way up in our growing city; many of them take many police resources. The City of Madison: always trying to do more with less as our city grows at a frenetic pace.

And then there is the trauma of responding to these calls. A school shooting. A 6-year-old boy with a gunshot wound to the eye. Overdoses. Countless death investigations. A shooting outside a frat house last Friday. Drive by shootings. Guns recovered in schools. Mental health issues around the clock that could blow your mind. Suicides by the dozens. Car and motorcycle accidents with unimaginable injuries and traffic disasters. Talk about trauma. And the need for recruiting. **Police officers are just working flat out.**

This year, MPD will lose many excellent command staff to their well-deserved retirements. Many seasoned officers and supervisors are retiring as well. Our exceptional police department is becoming increasingly young, with the vast majority of patrol officers on our streets with less than 5 years of experience. Many supervisors are just one little step ahead of those they're tasked with supervising. Some young officers are resigning a few years in, or less, because the work is hard. It takes everything they've got and then some. This generation values family time and time off and can not be counted on to work the volumes of overtime it takes to patrol this city or staff the overtime traffic grants made possible by the state and federal government.

When the Town of Madison came into the City of Madison back in 2022, the mayor added 6 police officers and 2 supervisor positions to provide services to the 5,000 new residents we gained. Since then, no new patrol officer positions have been added even though we've added some 15,000 residents. I don't get it.

It takes 1-2 years to go from recruiting to recruit to solo patrol. We will all see and feel the effects of not adding police resources to a city growing as fast in population and density as ours.

Notably, the mayor funds the Office of the Independent Monitor again, even though they have not lived up to their statutory duties and responsibilities over the past 5 years. Also notable, there are no funds for body cameras included in her budget after the successful pilot in the north district. She has money for public libraries and imagination centers, more homeless shelters and services that the private sector largely funded in the past. She finds money for more ambulances and paramedics and "violence prevention." She absorbs a new bus system running \$6 million over budget, but has nothing for our cops who are **working flat out** for our city. For us residents.

Then she says the Police Chief didn't ask for any more resources. I find this unimaginable. Nevertheless, the mayor should know that as mayor, she is responsible for enforcing local ordinances and laws within the city. She is responsible for the health and well-being of the city and her employees. And the mayor has the budget authority to carry out our city's priorities. We see where policing falls on the list.

Disappointed, but not surprised,

Bonnie Roe
District 11

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