

Comments received by St Paul City Council Ward 6 regarding the 2021 Budget, from December 3<sup>rd</sup> through December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

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**12/8/2020**

As you know, I live in Ward 6 and am a leader in ISAI AH. I'm contacting you thank you for your leadership and desire to shift resources away from the current police budget into community-first public safety initiatives and other solutions that address overall community wellness especially in a pandemic and an economic downturn.

We had a situation on my block a week ago, where the police had to be called, because there was a physical brawl happening that stemmed from domestic violence. I find it very frustrating, because the police have been called to this residence multiple times for domestic abuse there have been so many opportunities to intervene proactively in this situation, if we had more resources invested in social work, and drug treatment centers. The police CANNOT be our only solution to the problems that plague our neighborhoods. It's not sustainable, and it's not helpful.

I'm so grateful that you are committed to fight for Saint Paulities who need a progressive champion. This kind of leadership is what can truly make Saint Paul the most livable city in America. I look forward to working with you to continue pushing our city to move in this direction both in this budget and also as we head into 2021 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Athena Hollins

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As St. Paul residents (Ward 5) and leaders in ISAI AH, we are contacting you to express our appreciation for your leadership and desire to shift resources away from the current police budget into community-first public safety initiatives and other solutions that address overall community wellness especially in a pandemic and an economic downturn.

Thank you for your commitment to fight for Saint Paulities who need a progressive champion. This kind of leadership is what can truly make Saint Paul the most livable city in America. We look forward to working with you to continue pushing our city to move in this direction both in this budget and also as we head into 2021 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Gus and Deb Avenido

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My name is Rick Hedrick and I live in Ward 6 and am a leader in ISAI AH. I'm contacting you thank you for your leadership and desire to shift resources away from the current police budget into community-first public safety initiatives and other solutions that address overall community wellness especially in a pandemic and an economic downturn. Being out of work, it is reassuring to know that you have my back and support overall community wellness measures. I'm so grateful that you are committed to fight for Saint Paulities who need a progressive champion. This kind of leadership is what can truly make Saint

Paul the most livable city in America. I look forward to working with you to continue pushing our city to move in this direction both in this budget and also as we head into 2021 and beyond.

Rick Hedrick

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My name is Ilse Griffin and I live in Ward 4. I'm contacting you thank you for your leadership and desire to shift resources away from the current police budget into community-first public safety initiatives and other solutions that address overall community wellness especially in a pandemic and an economic downturn. I'm so grateful that you are committed to fight for Saint Paulities who need a progressive champion. This kind of leadership is what can truly make Saint Paul the most livable city in America. I look forward to working with you to continue pushing our city to move in this direction both in this budget and also as we head into 2021 and beyond.

Best,

Ilse Hogan Griffin

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My name is Rich Nymoan and I live in Ward 6 and am a leader in ISAIAH. I'm contacting you to thank you for your leadership and desire to shift resources away from the current police budget into community-first public safety initiatives and other solutions that address overall community wellness especially in a pandemic and an economic downturn. This is important to me especially because of the huge rise in homeless encampments from COVID.

I'm so grateful that you are committed to fight for Saint Paulities who need a progressive champion. This kind of leadership is what can truly make Saint Paul the most livable city in America. I look forward to working with you to continue pushing our city to move in this direction both in this budget and also as we head into 2021 and beyond.

Rich Nymoan

**12/4/2020**

Dear Councilmember Yang,

The frequency of community calls for service (to 911 and more) and levels of crime in St. Paul area increasing, as is the city's population. It's clear that we can't go backwards to reduce the size of the police force.

I'm writing as an officer with the St. Paul Police Department to share information first-hand. Our team is dedicated to advocating for victims of crime and providing for a safer community.

Even last year's police staffing report showed e don't have enough officers to keep up with what the community is telling us they need. We aren't able to arrive as quickly as we ought to after a call and we aren't able to process evidence fast enough to pursue justice on behalf of victims and some evidence can even be lost.

People who commit crimes can grow bolder and commit more and sometimes escalating crimes if they aren't held accountable, leading to more victims without justice.

I know budget times are hard for everyone and there are tough choices for the city to consider when the money has come up short. But I believe the community deserves public safety now more than ever and I urge the council to oppose any efforts which shrink the size of the police force.

Sincerely,

Nicolle Sparks

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Dear Councilmember Yang,

I'm a constituent of yours and am writing about a huge issue for me - the safety of our community.

I think it's a fair expectation that we have a safe community supported by a police force able to do their work. With the pandemic we've seen even more crime. But instead of getting support and help police officers need, we learn the city is considering CUTTING 40 offices.

This is wrong.

So wrong for the victims of crime.

So wrong for the safety of our community.

Please fix this immediately.

I don't want increased crime in St. Paul. We need our police.

Sincerely,

Bob Kiley

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Dear Councilmember Yang,

I am a resident of St. Paul and one of your constituents. I'm very concerned that my city leaders aren't taking public safety seriously. While preventative measures are important, they don't address the crime that has already happened. We are already at double the number of murders compared to this time last year and we somehow expect the police to be able to take care of these serious crimes without giving them the resources they need. It's heartbreaking. If we don't provide adequate resources, violent criminals will stay on the street and in a position to commit more crimes. Please look to other parts of the budget to make your cuts and help keep my city safe by keeping the police force size at least as big as it already is.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Lodge

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Dear Council Member Yang,

Thank you for your efforts to steward the city's limited resources responsibly during very difficult times. I am writing to request Council members do all they can to lessen the Mayor's proposed cuts to the overall Library budget. Please fund the ability to hire staff when the libraries can reopen in a post-pandemic environment for fuller services and more hours. The Friends request up to \$450,000 be invested in this fund, but any investment will mean more services for the City and the people who need the library the most. When the library is funded we are funding public safety, they are funding education, they are funding workforce development, and so much more.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Decourt- SPPS middle school librarian

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Dear Council Member Yang,

I am writing to remind you council member when you fund the library you are funding public safety, funding education, funding workforce development, and so much more. Please consider the many readers in this state who love to read when the budget come to the library.

Randy de Rosier

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Dear Councilperson Yang -

I am just writing a quick note to say that I am very supportive of adequate budget for the public library system. Their role in society (even in a pandemic) is unique and is a benefit to all of us - even if we ourselves are not a library user.

Please support an adequate budget for the libraries as they continue to provide the support our students (of all ages) need as well as those looking for employment, or leisure reading or a comfortable place to be (well, back to that role post pandemic anyway).

I do think there may be some parts of our city that are not as branch rich as my area and perhaps some locations could be re thought. We moved to Phalen Heights in the spring and I was so surprised that there are 3 branches within 2 miles of our home.

Thank you for your work.

Beth Clausen

**12/1/2020**

Councilmember Yang,

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I'm sending you comments on the proposed budget, which pertain to policing, public safety, and the Community-First Public Safety initiatives the council passed last year. While I'm a resident of Ward 7, I think that the way I frame these concerns speaks to the entire council. I trust that you'll consider them in that light.

Best regards,  
Marc

Crowing one season, crawfishing the next:  
Elected leaders are not walking their talk on police reform in St. Paul

As the unrest unfolded in Minneapolis last summer, Mayor Melvin Carter III and some members of the City Council told us St. Paulites to relax. Our neighbors' reaction to George Floyd's death, and the fierce calls for deep reform of policing that it spawned, shouldn't concern us, they said. In public statements to both local and national media, they reassured us that, in so many words, those reforms *had already happened* in St. Paul.

It turns out this isn't the case. To be sure, Mayor Carter and the Council have made substantive efforts to improve policing in St. Paul, such as implementing common-sense restrictions on the use of force and intensifying BIPOC recruitment for its police academy. But the Community-First Public Safety (CFPS) initiatives that they funded last year with great fanfare — that Carter claims as one of his top priorities — have actually not been fully implemented. These consist of a suite of alternative measures to ensure safety and prevent crime, many of which involve precisely the kind of “unbundling” of public safety from the police department that Minneapolisians were calling for. Others, like the Right Track youth jobs program, were meant to get at the root causes of criminal activity, which Carter himself claims to focus on.

To say that these CFPS efforts have not been implemented is not hyperbole: As reported in the press, they've mostly been delayed, altered, or cancelled. More than a quarter of the funds approved for their 2020 rollout were shaved off. And now, in his 2021 budget, Carter proposes to continue the anemic launch of this so-called signature initiative, cutting it relative to last year's funding.

Mayor Carter and councilmembers cannot have it both ways. They cannot crow during one season that they're national leaders in police reform, and then crawfish by cutting funds for those same reforms in the next. They aren't walking their talk.

Critics claim that with this year's spike in violent crime, this is not a moment to experiment with public safety. According to Root and Restore St. Paul, the city spends a remarkable 32 percent of its general fund on policing; if anything, these voices say, we should increase this amount and hire more officers.

But there are two problems with this argument. The first is that, currently, much of policing is not focused on preventing or solving violent crime. As an audit of 911 calls is revealing, the majority of calls to St. Paul police — an estimated 77,000 this year — involve innocuous matters, like barking dogs and parking complaints. Yet police must still process this enormous volume of requests, eroding the amount of time they spend on serious crime. The solution, however, is not to beef up policing: It is to more aggressively unbundle non-violent public safety concerns from their current home in the police department. Significant pieces of CFPS aim to do this, yet our leaders won't forcefully fund and pursue them.

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The second problem with this argument is more fundamental. When discerning leaders talk about the city's response to the last economic downturn, one hears them characterize it as deeply flawed. Under Chris Coleman, St. Paul slashed budgets for recreation centers, youth programming, and much more. As a result, in the wake of the Great Recession, we witnessed a "lost generation" — a cohort of underprivileged youth and young adults who, for the lack of guidance and opportunity, turned to criminal activity. In a city with profound, well-known racial disparities, we abandoned certain neighborhoods in the name of fiscal austerity, reaping a harvest of crime even as the police department's budget grew. We continue to pay the price, these leaders say, for those short-sighted decisions.

Citizens should recognize that, in terms of their priorities during this recession, our leadership is threatening to drive us down that same cursed path. Under the proposed budget, St. Paul would spend more on policing than on libraries, winter street maintenance, youth job development, financial empowerment, citywide recreation programs, BIPOC business development, human rights, and arts and community gardening initiatives *combined*.

Given the negative impact this imbalance will have on public safety, the mayor and council should reconsider the skewed priorities in the proposed budget, which cuts the police department by only 2% but areas like public health and community development by double-digit amounts. At the very least, they could walk their own talk, following through on commitments they proudly boasted about this summer by fully funding CFPS.

Marc

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