

February 11, 2008

Mayor Tom Barrett

Alderman Michael Murphy

City Hall

200 W. Wells Street

Milwaukee, WI

Dear Mayor Barrett and Alderman Murphy:

Thank you for your letter dated February 8, 2008 regarding proposed changes to the work release program in Milwaukee County. As you know, public safety is my number one priority and I take your concerns very seriously.

Currently, judges can sentence individuals to work release. Under the system we inherited, the individuals work (usually during the day) and then report to the Community Corrections Center (CCC) to sleep at night.

At a meeting of our public safety team early last year, I raised questions about how good

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that system was for public safety. Staff at the CCC check in work release participants to sleep, but there is no direct supervision of each individual during the day when they are supposed to be at work. I suggested that we consider a better system to monitor these individuals every minute of every day.

The 2008 county budget that was proposed in September and passed by the County Board in November tentatively approves moving to a system that replaces limited supervision with 24/7 supervision through the use of GPS tracking technology. The proposal also narrows the eligibility of the individuals who might participate in the program.

Per your concern that violent offenders and drug dealers currently sentenced to work release might be placed on the system, the language included in the budget clearly prohibits those types of offenders from participating in a GPS system. In fact, the budget proposal actually narrows the types of individuals who can be placed in the community from the current system.

In addition, the budget language also calls for referring the proposal to the Community Justice Council (CJC) for review. At the December meeting of the CJC Executive Committee, Mayor Barrett suggested that the GPS tracking system proposal would be a great item for the CJC to review at the first meeting of the full CJC – as an example of the substantive issues that the CJC would deal with in the future.

As you know, House of Correction Superintendent Ron Malone gave a complete review of the proposal to the full membership of the CJC at the January meeting. It was then sent to the Jail and Huber Committee for review and a future recommendation to the full CJC.

The members of the CJC had a great deal of discussion about the idea and talked about items like adding absconder units and defining the profile of who could participate. These suggestions were referred to the standing committee for review.

In other words, your comments about the proposal should be directed to the standing committee of the CJC that is reviewing the GPS tracking system concept. Per language in the 2008 county budget, the county will not implement a change in the Huber system until a recommendation is received from the members of the CJC.

Public safety is my number one priority and I want a system that does more to protect the public than the system we inherited. In the meantime, I suggest that you join me in petitioning the judges on the Milwaukee County bench to insure that they do not sentence offenders to work release who are a potential risk to the safety of the public.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Scott Walker

Milwaukee County Executive

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