

During your meeting, I will be attending the annual Circle of Women luncheon at the Midwest Airlines Center for the YW of Greater Milwaukee. Members of our cabinet and I buy a table each year for this event that supports women and children in need in our county. Supervisor Borkowski asked me to share some brief comments on the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system with you.

I know that there has been a great deal of discussion and concern regarding Milwaukee County's funding capabilities and long-term role in the EMS system as we begin negotiations with host communities on new contracts for 2007 and beyond. I wanted to take this opportunity to clarify my thoughts on this matter.

As the host community mayors and fire chiefs are aware, I asked my Director of Health and Human Services, Rob Henken, and his Director of County Health Programs, John Chianelli, to initiate discussions with the host communities regarding the next contracts. They just met again yesterday.

With my advice and consent, Mr. Henken and Mr. Chianelli drafted the attached negotiating concepts. These present some thoughts and ideas regarding ways in which the existing system and its existing lines of responsibility and procedures might be modified to generate better efficiency and potentially decrease the fiscal burden faced by both the County and the host communities. This paper also emphasizes the critical role that Milwaukee County plays in administering and coordinating our outstanding EMS system and indicates our hope and desire to continue that role.

As Mr. Henken has repeatedly indicated at the initial meetings, however, it is premature to discuss the amount of funding that Milwaukee County will be able to commit to the EMS program in 2007 and beyond. In light of our existing fiscal crisis – more than an \$80 million shortfall in 2007 and more than \$270 million over the next five years – we must examine all non-mandated services and funding provided by Milwaukee County.

Recently, we initiated our 2007 Budget process and I am hopeful that we will be able to provide Mr. Henken with some initial guidance on EMS funding by later this spring or early this summer. In the meantime, I believe it is important to continue the discussions we are having with the host communities so that we can first reach agreement on the type of EMS system we would like to maintain in Milwaukee County and the roles and responsibilities of the various system participants, and then determine how it will be funded once we have greater clarity on the County's overall budget situation.

I look forward to continued dialogue with you on this extremely important issue.

Sincerely,