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In Disrupted Budget Address, Mayor Frey Talks Safety Beyond Policing but Sticks with Status Quo Solutions in Requesting New Officers and More Money for MPD

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Minneapolis, MN--Community members from Reclaim the Block, Twin Cities Justice for Jamar and their supporters packed the room for Mayor Jacob Frey’s Budget address today, in which he announced his recommended budget for 2020.

The address began thirty minutes late after community members were initially prevented from entering the chamber--eighty percent of seats had been reserved for city officials, many of whom did not attend--and only fifteen seats were initially reserved for the community.

The Mayor paid lip service to prioritizing economic inclusion and a holistic approach to safety, but his recommendation that the city add 14 more sworn officers reveals his true priority: keeping the city on course to continue an inflated investment in MPD--a department plagued by violence, unaccountability, and lack of community trust.

That contradiction was reflected in how the morning began, said Kandace Montgomery, Executive Director of Black Visions Collective. “How are you going to say that you want to lift up people of color when you literally locked people out of the most basic part of the process?”

The Mayor spoke about an abundance of city resources, yet used the same fear tactics he’s used in the past to push for an even more bloated police budget: his proposal would add over eight million dollars to MPD, pushing their budget over 190 million dollars. For comparison, CPED (Community Planning and Economic Development) would get 120 million and the Health department just 24 million.

“Safe and secure housing is at the heart of keeping public peace,” Frey said. We agree, and commend the Mayor for his proposed investments in measures like opioid response, affordable housing and economic inclusion. They are positive steps. But they are not enough. By continuing to fund MPD at such a massive scale the Mayor’s budget will not create the transformation change he says he wants.

Frey relied on the personal story of Police Chief Arrodondo in justifying his request. “If we aren’t going to step up and make transformational change in MPD now – with this chief – then when?” He said, “With what Chief?”

But history shows that individuals can’t redeem broken institutions, and this strategy has failed before. “We tried to make change with Tony Bouza. We tried to make change with Jeanne
Harteau,” said activist Tony Williams. “Transformational change of the police is impossible, and it’s more than time we looked to alternatives to our city’s safety.”

Reclaim the Block will be looking more closely at the Mayor’s proposed budget and looks forward to working with a variety of community partners to develop a budget that actually works for Minneapolis. We look forward to delivering our recommendations at and before the public comment hearings for the 2020 budget, which will take place on November 1st and 28th.

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