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All quotes attributable to Defund WPD

Statement on Worcester City Council's Refusal to Hold Special Budget Meeting

Tonight the Worcester City Council passed on an opportunity to revisit their vote on the FY 2021 budget that allocated an additional \$254,000 to the Worcester Police Department. When faced with an historic moment in time, our elected officials failed to meet it.

The Council ran out of time to fully vet other options for this \$254,000 police increase because they did not take the voices of their constituents seriously. The Council saw over 400 people call in their meetings, heard over 150 speakers and sat through five hours of urgent testimony overwhelmingly in favor of using this money for services that could be provided by the Worcester Public Schools, the Worcester Public Library, the WRTA, and other desperately underfunded city programs. Hundreds more were denied their right to speak.

For three weeks the Council ignored its residents and the local and national groundswell of support for police defunding. Then, when they started to take our voices seriously, it was too late. If they had acted earlier, perhaps some of the budgetary changes proposed by Councilors King, Rivera and Rosen would be reflected at the start of FY 2021 as a symbol of goodwill and a demonstration that this body wants to put actual legislative action behind their "Black Lives Matter" political rhetoric.

If the motions proposed by these three Councilors are indeed enacted after the FY 2021 budget goes into effect, we again assert that the money to pay for these programs come from the WPD's \$52.8 million budget. Otherwise, all the Council will have done is expand policing at the expense of underfunded services - a direct contradiction to the values of the Movement for Black Lives. These proposed programs also require serious vetting by experts and professionals before being implemented in Worcester.

We have promised the Council in weeks past that there will be pushback if funding to WPD is not capped at last year's level. The Council's failure to take seriously the requests of its residents and its place in this present day civil rights movement only redoubles our commitment to keeping that promise. Defund WPD is not done fighting for a city budget that reflects the needs of all of its residents and makes smart investments in the services and programs that prevent crime rather than react to it.

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