



Three Bears Lodge and Convention Center Just Opened!



Search Recent News Archives Web for

Go

Welcome Guest
Sign Up | Sign In | Member Benefits

Saturday, Aug 19, 2006

[Back to Home >](#)

Ramsey County

Posted on Sat, Aug. 19, 2006 [email this](#) [print this](#) [reprint or license this](#)

Two fiscal conservatives want larger tax increase

Officials seek more police for their high-crime districts

BY JASON HOPPIN
Pioneer Press

Putting his concerns about public safety above his fiscal conservatism, St. Paul City Council Member Dan Bostrom said Friday he would support a tax increase above the mayor's proposed 8.5 percent hike if it meant more cops on the streets.

"As long as you're that deep into this, why not get something for your money?" Bostrom said.

Mayor Chris Coleman's 2007 proposed budget would add five officers, but Bostrom wants that number increased to 25. Adding 20 officers would cost more than \$1.2 million annually.

Council Member Debbie Montgomery said she would back Bostrom's idea. Her ward has several hot spots of violence and criminal activity, especially around University Avenue and Frogtown.

"If we don't have safety, no one's going to be here," Montgomery said.

Bostrom's comments follow a large Wednesday rally against crime in his East Side ward. Bostrom is the council's most ardent supporter of the police department, and his district also is home to some of the biggest crime and gang problems in St. Paul.

Bostrom said he would explore budget cuts to pay for the officers, but with the city already facing a \$16.5 million deficit, that may not be possible. In that case, Bostrom said, he would support a tax hike.

The announcement is significant because both Bostrom and Montgomery have voted to hold down taxes in the past. In 2004 and again in 2005, a City Council majority sought to increase taxes above then-Mayor Randy Kelly recommendations. Bostrom and Montgomery were in the minority, and both times the council did not have enough votes to override a Kelly veto.

How much Bostrom would increase taxes isn't clear. Bumping the levy to 9.5 percent would net the city about \$650,000 — enough to hire the 20 officers because they wouldn't start on the force until the middle of the year, after completing the police academy.

However, that would also require an additional increase next year to pay for the full year's 2008 salaries.

City Council President Kathy Lantry, who also represents the East Side, said she hasn't decided if she would support Bostrom's call for additional officers.

"It depends on how he's going to finance them. I'm really not interested in hiring additional police officers unless we have the finances to pay for them," Lantry said.

To help erase the looming \$16.5 million deficit, Coleman's budget includes the largest tax increase in many years. Until last year, St. Paul went more than a decade without a levy increase, and many have blamed that reality for the city's woeful bottom line.

Ann Mulholland, Coleman's chief of staff, said the police department is one of the few not to face any proposed budget cuts next year, and added that Coleman pushed the levy as high as he thought possible.

But if there is a will to raise taxes even more in exchange for more officers, the administration is willing to talk. "We're open to the conversation," Mulholland said.

Underlying this week's East Side rally is a perception that crime is on the rise, and residents there aren't the only ones to believe it. The Summit Hill neighborhood, for example, held a community safety meeting earlier this summer following a handful of assaults, burglaries and robberies. More than 120 people attended.

But the latest city statistics covering the year's first seven months point to a decrease in crime. Though robberies and residential burglaries are up 17 percent, crimes overall have dropped 6

REVERSE MORTGAGE

An FHA Designed and Insured Mortgage

Why Get a Reverse Mortgage?

You Remain in Ownership

Please call 952-703-8850 for more information.

- Jobs
- Cars
- Real Estate
- Apartments
- Local Shopping
 - Find Sales & Deals
 - Shop Local Stores
- All Classifieds
- Personals

- News
 - Nation & World
 - Local & Community
 - St. Paul Metro
 - Dakota County
 - North Suburbs
 - Washington County
 - Minnesota
 - Wisconsin
 - Schools
- Columnists
- Opinion
- Politics
- Business
- Sports
- Life & Home
- Entertainment
- Outdoors & Leisure
- Travel
- Obituaries

- ONLINE EXTRAS
 - Watchdog
 - Archives
 - Maps & Directions
 - Newsletters
 - Traffic Reports
 - Weather
 - Yellow Pages
 - Discussion Boards
 - Print Edition

- SITE SERVICES
 - Help
 - Feedback
 - Advertise
 - Subscriber Services
 - NIE

percent over the same period last year. Rapes are down 23 percent, assaults are down 9 percent and domestic disturbances are down 45 percent.

Bostrom said some neighborhoods have become "coarser," a term he borrowed from a former constituent who has since moved to another part of town. More beat cops would help combat quality-of-life crimes and keep them from evolving into bigger problems, and would make the neighborhoods a better place to live, work and grow up.

"You've got to get on the front end of that stuff," Bostrom said.

Jason Hoppin can be reached at jhoppin@pioneerpress.com or 651-292-1892.



Ads by Google

[Criminal Law Minnesota](#)

Attorneys: DWI, theft, sex crimes, juvenile, assault, & drug offenses.
www.criminalawminnesota.com

[Saint Paul Real Estate](#)

15 Years Experience. Sales Volume in Top 1% of Realtors. Buy or Sell.
bradpalecek.com

[Twin Cities New Homes](#)

New Housing Development with Great Schools & Over 10 Golf Courses.
www.chatfield.com/



Visit other Real Cities sites

[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Shop Local](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Homes](#)
[About TwinCities.com](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [Copyright](#) | [About the McClatchy Company](#)

