

STATEMENT REGARDING MY AFFIRMATIVE VOTE FOR THE 2006-2007 AMENDED BUDGET

I would like to commend the Administration, the Budget Department, my colleagues, and especially our Fiscal Analysis Division for all of the hard work and long hours put into helping address the budget that was presented to this Honorable Body on April 12.

When citizens expressed concern regarding the increase in bus fare for the disabled and seniors, the proposed bus fare increase was lowered from \$.75 to \$.50 to bring D-DOT in line with SMART. When citizens expressed concern regarding the reinstatement of bulk pickup, some progress was made in coming to a resolution, as the Administration agreed to quarterly bulk pickup and weekly yard waste removal. With respect to the solid waste fee, I firmly stand in opposition. If this Body decides to approve the trash collection fee, I implore my colleagues to ensure that any liens stemming from the trash collection fee do not trigger foreclosure proceedings. We must do all that we can to protect our citizens from losing their homes unnecessarily.

I believe this budget contains realistic projections and it paints a truer picture of the fiscal health of this city. However, I am deeply concerned about balancing this budget and future budgets on the backs of citizens and the working poor.

Historically, Detroiters have accepted increases in taxes and millages to save schools and to save the city. Ironically, Detroiters pay the highest insurance rates in the state, the highest property taxes in the state, and resoundingly feel as if they receive the lowest quality of respect and the lowest quality of city services. Our citizens are victims of high crime and low police response; unlighted, damaged streets; neglected inner-city neighborhoods, suffering schools, and fading recreational outlets. The solid waste fee is a punishment for people who have continued to live and pay unabated property taxes in this city. Many loyal citizens who truly love Detroit will view this fee as the last straw, and will leave.

Attempts at providing redress on behalf of citizens have not been without a fight. To illustrate, when the Administration proposed to increase the water rates, I and four other members of this Council battled for a Water Affordability Plan that was included in this budget with a \$5M appropriation from the Water Department. This small victory merely dents the wholistic support our citizens desperately need from city government. The Water Affordability Plan extends some relief, but not enough.

The solid waste fee, in and of itself, is not breaking the backs of citizens. It is the aggregate of problems that continue to nag, fester and eat away at our citizens' faith in this city's ability to manage debt, revenue, while simultaneously providing quality services.

I am voting for this amended budget because there is no acceptable solution to the \$43M deficit in the Department of Public Works (DPW). Council looked for alternative cuts across the board, but over 580 employees would be laid off, with the majority coming from the Police and Fire Departments. In this climate of crime, I believe that it is in the best interest of our city to retain as many police and fire officers as possible.

However, I must reiterate that I oppose the solid waste fee for all of the reasons previously stated. According to the Administration, the \$300.00 annual solid waste fee is a temporary measure to address the deficit in DPW until the Greater Detroit Resource Recovery Authority (GDRRA) debt is paid off in 2009. As explained to Council, the plan is that the fee will roll back in 2009. In my opinion, the fee should permanently roll away. I will be working diligently to find funding sources to alleviate the additional burden imposed on citizens because of the solid waste fee.

I believe that there must be a fundamental re-engineering of city government that seriously takes into account the consolidation of overlapping departments and the elimination of structural deficit spending. In the upcoming 2007-2008 Fiscal Year, the Administration and Council must earnestly resolve to address these critical issues. We cannot continue to borrow and we cannot continue to balance the budget on the backs of those who choose to stay in this city. I applaud the Administration for walking in the right direction by presenting a pragmatic budget this year, but now is the time to break into a sprint when it comes to providing quality core services for citizens.

Dated: May 24, 2006