Pols say 'no' to tax increases, police cuts

Quinn, Tabares, Burke vote against mayor's 2021 City budget


Quinn


Tabares


Burke

By Tim Hadac

The three aldermen serving Clearing and Garfield Ridge are among those City Council members who last week voted against Mayor Lori Lightfoot's proposed $12.8 billion City budget for 2021.

The budget passed on a 29-21 vote.

The deal breaker for all three aldermen appeared to be Lightfoot's plan to increase property taxes by $94 million and cut funding for the Chicago Police Department.

"As an alderman who represents a large number of police officers and first responders, I cannot justify a budget that cuts police funding by $33 million and increases property taxes on residents struggling with the harsh realities of the pandemic," said 13th Ward Ald. Marty Quinn. "We are starved for more police resources in the 13th Ward and can't afford a further reduction. Ultimately, the mayor's budget doesn't add up for my community."

Echoing Quinn's view was 23rd Ward Ald. Silvana Tabares, who said it is "wrong to cut our police department by $33 million while also increasing property taxes on working families, seniors, and small business owners. We need more police resources and relief for working families and businesses like those in our neighborhoods. This budget

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falls too short."

Fourteenth Ward Ald. Edward M. Burke, whose ward includes a slice of the north end of Garfield Ridge, issued no statement but let his vote speak for itself.

The $94 million property tax increase will mean that a person owning a home worth $250,000 will pay about an extra $56 per year. Atop that, Lightfoot's budget makes future property tax increases automatic, tying them to the consumer price index—so that no votes are needed to increase property taxes.

Lightfoot's budget also raises gasoline taxes by three cents a gallon.

Voters agree with aldermen

Clearing and Garfield Ridge residents seemed universal in their agreement with Quinn, Tabares and Burke.

"Marty is our guy, the one we can always count on," said Steve O'Connell outside Fair Share Finer Foods at 63rd and Narragansett. "He may be on the losing side of this vote, but his position is a winning one in this neighborhood. We're with him."

Bogdan Zielinski said that continued tax increases "are driving people away from Chicago. Why should I live here when I can live for so much less in Will County, and with a bigger house and yard? Makes me want to move."

Monica Guzman said she understands "why more revenue is needed, but why does it have to fall on the backs of people who can least afford it? The mayor should have had the courage to put a tax on transactions at the Chicago Stock Exchange or something like that? Why are rich investors always let off the hook?"

Frank Borsinello praised the aldermen and said the City should "open the doors wide for video gambling and then tax that. You'd get lots of revenue and at the same time give these bars and restaurants a break. Otherwise, we're going to be a city of 95% poor people and 5% rich people with no middle class. Like Detroit is."