Aldermen press cop chief

Want carryover for police vacation days

By Tim Hadac

Four Southwest Side aldermen have joined five of their City Council colleagues to press Chicago Police Supt. David Brown over vacation carryover.

Aldermen Marty Quinn (13th), Silvana Tabares (23rd), Raymond Lopez (15th) and Matt O'Shea (19th) signed a "letter of concern" to Brown last week regarding an apparent decision by CPD to not allow police officers to carry unused 2020 vacation days into 2021.

"Many members of the Police Department simply have not had the opportunity to utilize their earned vacation days because of the mix of civil unrest, COVID-19 staffing shortfalls, etc.," the letter reads. "We are asking you to take immediate administrative action to allow all impacted employees to carryover all unused vacation time into 2021.

"Aside from the lost days, the rush to use vacation days now has the two-fold potential of exacerbating overtime resulting from the ensuing manpower shortage," the aldermen continued. "The wellness of our officers is at the heart of this request. Please take immediate action to provide relief to our police officers."

Southwest Side aldermen not signing the letter include George Cardenas (12th), Edward M. Burke (14th), Stephanie D. Coleman (16th), David Moore (17th), Derrick Curtis (18th) and Michael Rodriguez (22nd).

A Greater Southwest News-Herald request for comment went unanswered by Brown.

Reaction in the neighborhood appeared universally supportive of vacation carryover.

"I have my criticisms of the police, you better believe that," said Darion Williams as he stood outside the CVS at 63rd and Pulaski. "But what's right is right. If they have vacation days they earned but can't take them because the mayor made them work, they shouldn't lose those days."

Mary Valek said she is "tired of Lori Lightfoot abusing our police. She throws them under the bus every chance she gets. And now she wants to rob them of vacation days they earned? Enough already!"

Jose Guevara said at his job, "vacation days are a 'use it or lose it' thing. If I asked to carry them over I think the company would laugh at me. Still, if they used to be able to carry them over but now they can't, that's like a pay cut."

Police "need a breather—a long breather—after all they've been through this year," said Lorena da Silva. "I say give them what they need so they can do their job protecting us."

Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 7 President John Catanzara called the expression of concern "a step in the right direction" but said he was disappointed that only nine of 50 aldermen signed.

"Drain the Council!" he posted on social media.