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## Madison community leader advocates for gun buyback program

Critics claim buyback programs do not get guns out of criminals' possession

by KİYOKO REIDY · Dec 10, 2015

A local community leader is advocating for the implementation of a city gun buyback program that would allow citizens to turn in their guns in exchange for money.

The buyback program would require a donor to provide reward money for individuals who turn in guns, Michael Johnson, president of Dane County Boys and Girls Club said. Currently, no donors have stepped forward to offer these funds.

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This type of program is not a new idea to Madison, Johnson said.

Similar gun buyback programs were implemented in 1994 and again in 2005. The buyback program in 1994 was considered to be one of the

most successful buyback programs in the country at the time, he said.

“We are not targeting guns that are broken or do not function, but working semi-automatic weapons,” Johnson said.

Though it would be the city’s responsibility to run such a program, Johnson said there should be a collaboration between local nonprofits, faith leaders and Madison Police Department.

MPD Chief Mike Koval issued a statement responding to pressure to implement a gun buyback program.

“While it certainly cannot be denied that gun violence has become a focal point in our lives and it is appropriate to consider any/all options to mitigate harmful effects, gun buyback programs may be a great grassroots initiative in raising awareness,” Koval said in the statement. “But programs like these have not shown to have had demonstrable results in keeping dangerous weapons out of the hands of criminals.”

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Criminals have little incentive to turn in their guns, Koval said in the statement. If a private donor were to come forward and offer to set up a system for reclaiming guns, MPD would support that endeavor, but currently there is no funding for such a program.

Ald. Mike Verveer, District 4, said both previous programs had been funded by a donor.

Though Johnson acknowledged both the need to find a donor willing to fund the program and the concern that the people willing to turning in their guns are law abiding citizens, he still emphasized any way of decreasing the number of guns in the community can be beneficial.

“If there is even one situation where someone turning in a gun could potentially save someone’s life, it is worth it,” Johnson said. “The city should consider that.”

MPD currently has a system in place for reclaiming guns that are no longer wanted, but there is no financial reward. If an individual wishes to surrender a gun, they should call the Dane County Public Safety Communications call center at (608) 255-2345, and an officer will come to the place of residence to reclaim the gun, according to the statement.

*Teymour Tomsyck contributed reporting to this article.*

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