

From: [cedes yarbrow](#)
To: [#CI-StPaul_Ward1](#)
Cc: [#CI-StPaul_Ward2](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward3](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward4](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward5](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward6](#); [#CI-StPaul_Ward7](#)
Subject: URGENT!! Reallocate Festival Safety Funding to Community-Based Organizers
Date: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 12:52:17 PM

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Think Before You Click: This email originated **outside** our organization.

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Mercedes Yarbrough, also known as Mizz Mercedes (#YoKidzFavoriteTeacher). I am writing on behalf of the Rondo community as a community leader and organizer of the annual Rondo Days Festival and the Frogtown Arts Festival.

I am asking—directly and urgently—that funding for community festivals be allocated to festival organizers and community-based safety teams rather than the Saint Paul Police Department.

As a community leader, I have witnessed firsthand the deep and ongoing distrust between community residents and SPPD. In many cases, interactions and altercations involving police presence at community events are not resolved peacefully and often escalate rather than de-escalate. This has only intensified given the current climate (with ICE), where federal enforcement actions and the lack of visible police protection in our neighborhoods have further eroded trust. Community members are left feeling unprotected, unheard, and unsafe.

Despite this, our communities continue to show up for one another. It is our residents—our elders, organizers, volunteers, and neighbors—who are actively protecting our spaces and ensuring the safety of our events. Our tax dollars fund law enforcement salaries, yet when it comes to the real work of keeping our community events safe, it is the community doing the labor.

This reality has made one thing very clear: our festivals do not require SPPD presence to be safe and successful.

The excessive fees charged for police services at community festivals pull critical resources away from what truly makes these events meaningful—youth programming, cultural education, local artists, performers, food vendors, and healing-centered experiences. These funds should instead be reinvested back into the community by hiring trusted, community-based safety teams who have established relationships, cultural competency, and sound judgment.

Community protection is not an abstract idea—it is already happening. What we are asking for is that the City recognize, respect, and fund it.

If the City of Saint Paul is truly committed to equity, public safety, and community trust, then funding decisions must reflect that commitment. Supporting festival organizers and community-led safety efforts is a tangible and immediate step toward that goal.

We deserve to celebrate our culture without being financially penalized or placed in environments that feel unsafe due to unnecessary police presence. I urge you to reallocate these funds and stand with the communities who continue to show up, protect one another, and build something better.

Respectfully,

Mercedes Yarbrough
Mizz Mercedes (#YoKidzFavoriteTeacher)
Community Leader & Festival Organizer
Rondo Community

Mercedes Yarbrough
aka Mizz Mercedes #YoKidzFavoriteTeacher