

Councilmembers:

As you continue your 2020 budget deliberations and in particular, a review of the Seattle Police Department (SPD), I wanted to share some more information on the Executive's efforts to re-envision policing with community and carry out a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the current services and functions delivered by SPD. As you know, our rebalancing package proposed a \$20 million cut in SPD's spending or 5% of the total budget.

Some of the proposals we have heard that Council may be considering related to the current 2020 budget rebalancing effort would immediately cut as much as 25% (\$100 million) or 50% (\$200 million) from SPD's budget. These blunt efforts would not serve our communities or lead to the thoughtful change needed. SPD has already spent half of its \$400 million annual budget by now, so a \$200 million cut (or 50% of SPD's budget) would leave the department with zero budget remaining for 2020 and require the City to abolish the department. \$100 million reduction (or 25% of SPD's budget) would mean immediate layoffs of up to 1,000 personnel leaving Chief Best and the Seattle Police Department unable to conduct basic functions. In addition, it would be irresponsible to make immediate cuts without any conceivable mechanism to stand up alternative models to achieve community safety.

In mid-June, the Mayor and Chief Best tasked SPD leadership to work with Budget Director Noble, Deputy Mayor Ranganathan and me to develop both short and long-term actions related to policing and community safety. This work would inform the Mayor's 2021-2022 Biennium Budget proposal while laying a foundation for meaningful community engagement and feedback.

This will focus largely on two areas: first, how do we reduce the need for police or public health interventions by truly investing in community based solutions for true safety, like health, opportunity, education and restorative justice; second, how do we shift work from police to a public health harm reduction model. Our goal is to create a new model of community safety that extends beyond the appropriate role for police, to what systems do we need to create or prioritize for healthy communities. What we expect from this analysis is that work done currently done by SPD may more appropriately be carried out by civilians in SPD, by other civilian personnel in government or by other community based organizations or trained professionals (e.g., trained crisis professionals, addiction specialists, family counselors).

SPD's budget can and will be reduced through all of these strategies. However, the Executive does not think that simply making target cuts in SPD's budget, without looking at the work or personnel being done/cut or the ability to have others do the work, will advance community safety. As evidenced by our creation and expansion of Health One – there are non-police, public health-based models to respond to calls that have traditionally been police calls. But building the program, hiring and training the professionals at even the pilot scale takes significant resources. As we move to more community based solutions, there must be the capacity to do the work, which will require new and sustained resources at every level from recruiting, training and retaining employees, to developing a 24/7 response network, to developing protocols regarding the need for parallel SPD supportive responses.

As you have undoubtedly observed over just the last several weeks in your analysis, Chief Best oversees a \$400 million SPD budget, with over 2,000 sworn and civilian personnel, no less than 50 functional priority work areas and over 270,000 annual 911 calls dispatched for patrol response that illustrates a complex organizational structure that will require time to thoughtfully consider and execute changes. That policy and budget analysis also must be paired with a robust conversation with the public with a true feedback loop to ensure community voices are heard.

A good recent example of this type of thorough analysis and human-centered design effort carried out by the

Executive would be the SPD hiring strategies our Innovation and Performance Team delivered in coordination with Council Central Staff and Council President Gonzalez's Office last year. This work was instrumental in your approval of funding for hiring reforms and pay incentives that has led to more diverse hiring of sworn officers. But that excellent analysis took the better part of a year to complete to examine only one aspect of SPD's work.

The Mayor shares the Council's urgency to move quickly to assess and implement new approaches to achieve better community safety outcomes. Our plan is as follows:

- The IDT will deliver preliminary recommendations for early actions and summation of areas for further analysis before the end of July to the Mayor. For weeks, the Mayor and Chief have examined functions that could be entirely removed from SPD. Some of these may reduce SPD's budget but may not ultimately reduce the overall City budget;
- Likely in September, the Mayor will transmit to the Council the 2021-22 Proposed Biennium Budget that will reflect initial structural reforms informed by community recommendations and corresponding budget actions related to SPD along with proposals for alternative models to deliver certain SPD services;
- This summer, the Executive will facilitate community engagement to inform the SPD budget work. The City will also support community-led participatory budgeting efforts with technical assistance and other resources;
- Community voice is critical to charting the course both on policing and on community investments. This work cannot all happen in the three months before submitting the budget, or even in 2020. Community engagement will continue in 2021 as we work to get these transformational and generational changes done right;
- The engagement and further IDT analysis will lead to additional recommendations for SPD reforms and alternative models for service delivery even after the budget is proposed;
- In early 2021, the Executive intends to bring forward additional structural reforms and budget changes for Council consideration related to SPD and new community safety investment strategies; and
- Concurrent with these efforts would be work tied to SPD labor negotiations, policy changes and recommendations from our civilian accountability partners, and a State Legislative Agenda focused on union reforms, police accountability, use of force and transparency initiatives.

As you can see, we have outlined a comprehensive process for this work that will lead into 2021 with regular check-in and decision points with the Council. Together, we can approach this important body of work thoroughly with your staff analysts, a coordinated community engagement strategy between the two branches of government and through a lens of tackling structural and institutional racism.

These budget reduction "targets" are also not informed by any analysis or considerations of the underlying functions and services that SPD currently delivers. For example, we have worked together to expand programs like the Community Service Officers, which is a civilian program at SPD. Dozens of sworn and civilian personnel work on oversight and accountability functions. Some of our younger and most diverse officers could be the first cut, defeating the hard work done to recruit officers that reflect and serve their communities. It seems inherently backwards to carry out a blunt cut without spending sufficient time on reviewing and understanding the work as it is currently being done today.

We have made available our budget office and SPD to support Council in your current review. There has never been a more important time, or topic that requires a collaborative partnership as we do this important and critical work around public safety. I am available with our team if you would like to learn more about the efforts we have already initiated and to discuss how we can achieve our shared goals.

Sincerely,

Mike Fong
Senior Deputy Mayor
City of Seattle