



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION
Human Rights Commission
Recommendation Number 20200622-002b: De-fund the Police

WHEREAS, Officers in The Austin Police Department have repeatedly used excessive force on camera without repercussions; and,

WHEREAS, The murder of Mike Ramos by Officer Christopher Taylor is apparent via video evidence when viewed by an unbiased observer; and,

WHEREAS, Austin Police Department has a widespread reputation of being more likely to use excessive force than Texas' other large jurisdictions; and,

WHEREAS, in the City of Austin Human Rights Community Budget forum, citizens of Austin provided the most consistent feedback this commission has received regarding budgetary concerns and implored us to express to City Council that the Austin Police Department budget should be reduced; and APD funding should be re-directed to Black and Brown communities that have faced brutal trauma from centuries of systemic racism from the police and other institutions; and,

WHEREAS, on April 29th, 2019, the Human Rights Commission unanimously voted to send recommendation number 20190429-003b: Fiscal Year 2020 Budget to City Council, and this recommendation in part recommended the City of Austin law enforcement strategy be refocused from traditional policing and criminalization, which has led in the past to over policing in minority communities, toward a greater reliance on diversionary, preventative, and rehabilitation programs. We also indicated this focus should include but not be limited to the diversion of funds into such programs that curb crime before it happens; and,

WHEREAS, on April 29th, 2019, the Human Rights Commission unanimously voted to send recommendation number 20190429-003b: Fiscal Year 2020 Budget to City Council, and this recommendation in part recommended the City of Austin deeply analyze the number of victims services counselors, mental health officers and other staff associated with the diversion of activity that is criminal on the surface, to evaluate whether more funds should be allocated to fund these positions. A deeper analysis than requiring a certain number of police officers per year citizen is required; and,

WHEREAS, On May 30th and 31st, 2020, Austin Police Department committed a war crime by utilizing tear gas, a substance banned by The Geneva Convention; and,

WHEREAS, On those same evenings, APD fired on clearly marked medical professionals, violating the near-century old standard of Medical Neutrality according to the Geneva Convention; and,

WHEREAS, The causation of police presence leading to lower crime rates has never been academically proven; and,

WHEREAS, The Chief of Police, Brian Manley, has repeatedly and publicly described his intention to defy local ordinances; and,

WHEREAS, The safety and well-being of our communities requires a historically conscious, community-lead, holistic change in the way our city approaches criminal offenses that centers voices of color; and,

WHEREAS, Black Lives Matter.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Human Rights Commission of The City of Austin demands the City Council direct the City Manager to create a one year framework to defund Austin Police Department which should include an immediate hiring freeze, a plan to protect the pensions of current and previous officers, and a plan to divert funds already allocated to APD to various community-based solutions, including, but not limited to hiring a large staff of social and trauma workers, expanding all-age education, job placement and creation, and unfettered access to all medical services both physical and mental, investment in local and/or small Black and Brown businesses, public housing, and free-at-point-of-access public transit.

Date of Approval: _____

Record of the vote: _____

Attest: _____

(Staff or board member can sign)