



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem and Council Members

**FROM:** Spencer Cronk, City Manager *sc*

**DATE:** June 17, 2020

**SUBJECT: Reimagining Public Safety for the City of Austin**

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The recent deaths of Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis at the hands of a police officer and our own officer-involved shooting death of Mr. Michael Ramos have created a community outcry the likes we have not seen in recent memory. I stand with the community, which is demanding that we implement the policy and cultural changes required to end the disproportionate impact of police violence on Black Americans, Latinx Americans, and other non-white ethnic communities. Reimagining Public Safety in Austin will require courage, decisiveness, and a willingness to explore opportunities not considered in the past.

We are committed to the work. Within this memo, I present our immediate actions and outline our next steps. This reimagining can only be achieved if we have candid input from our community, a commitment from our public safety employees, and the support of our City Council.

### Core Leadership Team

Consistent with SD23 principles, I have created a multidisciplinary team co-led by Deputy City Manager (DCM) Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, and Assistant City Managers (ACMs) Rey Arellano and Christopher Shorter to spearhead this effort. Within the enterprise, we are quickly organizing our resources to address the reimagining holistically. The work will involve leaders across our enterprise, including those within the Office of Police Oversight, the Equity Office, Intergovernmental Relations, Labor Relations, the Police Department, Public Health, Law, and others. The Core Leadership Team is creating Advisory Working Groups to drive the conversations on reimagining public safety. These groups will include community organization representatives from our advocacy, faith, union, business and public policy partners. We will also be working closely with our relevant boards and commissions, and Council's Public Safety Committee. The Core Leadership Team and Advisory Working Groups will focus on answering the following question: *What is a 'reimagined' public safety system in Austin and how do we get there?*

## Previewing Key Changes in the FY21 Proposed Budget

As a part of these discussions, we have looked closely at the proposed budget I will be presenting to Council in July. The proposed budget will highlight several functions that have traditionally been within APD, but which could be reimaged elsewhere. These functions include the Forensics Lab, 9-1-1 Call Takers/Dispatch, Victim Services, Training Academy and others.

The budget will also reflect Council direction to eliminate existing vacancies that cannot be reasonably filled within the next year and to not add additional officers in FY21 as originally envisioned in the five-year police staffing plan. This will result in the elimination of nearly 100 sworn positions from the initial FY21 budget forecast. While this does not impact the total number of current sworn police personnel, removing these positions from next year's budget will allow us to reassess and examine other approaches to how we approach public safety.

I have also decided to delay the July 2020 Cadet class. The events of the past weeks have had an impact on our ability to carry out Council direction with regard to implementing recommendations from the internal training audit. We will be evaluating when we might reschedule the Cadet class.

## Increasing transparency and accountability

We can be proud of the many things we have done in recent years – evolving the Police Monitor into a more effective Office of Police Oversight, increasing the percentage of City funds to health-related functions versus public safety, and Council adopting resolutions<sup>1</sup> that address institutional racism in the Austin Police Department (APD) and set racial justice-related goals in Strategic Direction 2023 (SD23).

We know that to build community trust, we will need to have new and strengthened transparency and accountability systems. Some of this work includes:

- Building on the foundation of our Office of Police Oversight (OPO) by increasing its resources and authority.
- Launching the Community Police Review Commission to work with OPO. Final interviews are planned for July 2020.
- Creating a Civil Rights division, the first of its kind for Austin.
- Creating a public dashboard on a new website to track progress on the recent Resolutions, as well as implementation of the Tatum investigation report recommendations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Resolutions [20191205-066](#), 20200611-050, 20200611-096 and 20200611-096. Note that the final executed resolutions from June 11, 2020 have not been posted as of this writing.

<sup>2</sup> [Investigation into Anonymous Complaints Alleging Use of Racist Language in the Austin Police Department and Next Steps](#)

## Long-Term Plan

*We cannot go back to the status-quo.* The systemic inequities throughout the history of policing that have played out in our community must be interrupted and reexamined in a deliberate and intentional process. Institutional racism is real and present in how we operate at all levels of government and the impacts of racism go far beyond policing. We agree with the American Public Health Association (APHA), who recently declared that that racism is a public health crisis that needs to be addressed in aggressive and innovative ways. We believe this must be done not only in areas of public health and policing, but also in housing, transportation, and economic development.

As we work on these immediate changes, we will gather public input on long-term efforts which will include exploring changes in discussions with Austin Police Association (APA) as well as legislative changes to public safety civil service statutes.

We look forward to hearing from our Advisory Working Groups on other actions we can take to demonstrate our commitment to transparency.

cc: Executive Team

Brian Manley, Austin Police Department Chief

Farah Muscadin, Police Oversight Director

Brion Oaks, Equity Officer

Brie Franco, Intergovernmental Relations Officer

Deven Desai, Labor Relations Officer