



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

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

**DATE:** March 22, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Police Chief Recruitment – Next Steps

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This memorandum provides information about the Austin Chief of Police search and the next steps in filling this critical and transformative position.

While change can be difficult and uncomfortable, it also brings opportunity. Like so many cities across the nation, we have heard our community call for transformational change in the area of public safety. The Reimagining Public Safety process, budget decoupling and department restructuring and, most recently, the announcement of Chief Brian Manley's retirement provide a unique opportunity to work with our community to bring new leadership that aligns with our values and our commitment to equity and community engagement. To lead that recruitment process, I have engaged Ralph Andersen & Associates who has assisted 35 other cities in hiring their Police Chiefs across the country since 2016.

This process will start immediately, and will rely heavily on extensive engagement with the community, the City's leadership, and the employees of the police department. The engagement will occur during all phases of the search. The following is an outline of the steps ahead, highlighting opportunities to incorporate both specific and broad input into the process and the selection:

*Phase I: Project Management & Candidate Profile Developed (March/April)*

- Conduct initial meetings with the search firm and city management to create a draft candidate profile. The candidate profile is the guiding document for the search, detailing desired attributes in candidates, challenges and opportunities for the next Chief, as well as outlining the search process.
- Meet with stakeholders in focus groups representing the many diverse communities and interests in Austin, including City leadership and employees across the police department to introduce the draft candidate profile and gather meaningful input.
- Conduct five open virtual community meetings targeted by Council districts to gather additional input on the candidate profile.
- Use the information gathered during these listening meetings to improve the draft profile into a final document.

*Phase II: Outreach and Recruiting (April/May/June)*

- Search firm creates an outreach and recruiting strategy based upon the candidate profile.
- Open a community survey to accept input from the broader Austin community.
- Search firm conducts extensive recruiting and outreach across the nation and, where applicable, beyond.
- Search firm evaluates candidates, conducts preliminary research, and makes recommendations.
- Close the Community survey and use results to help inform the next steps.

*Phase III: Selection (July/August)*

- Conduct initial interviews with top candidates, yielding a group of finalists. These initial interview panels will include community, City leadership, and police department viewpoints.
- Finalists will have selection activities in Austin, including interviews and five meetings to introduce them across the Austin community. Feedback from these community meetings will be collected to aid in the final selection.
- Conduct final vetting and selection of the top candidate.

I am committed to ensuring this will be a transparent and inclusive process, and my goal throughout is to ensure our residents are heard in who they want to see lead our police department. Interviews of finalists will, likewise, be highly inclusive so I can listen to the many stakeholders and communities in Austin to help with my decision.

The role of Police Chief is incredibly important not just to the city organization, but to our community as a whole. I hope through this process that we collectively find the ideal candidate – one who collaborates with our community, instills trust in the workforce, works to achieve results from established council policy, creates a culture of improvement and accountability, and is willing and able to lead the department in ways that lead to equitable public safety outcomes for all.

I am looking forward to engaging with all of you to ensure our next Police Chief will align with our collective vision for public safety and will be instrumental in leading us through, and taking us beyond, the transformational change we have already embarked on with community.

**Transition During Recruitment**

This recruitment process comes at a critical time for our community and the Austin Police Department. To ensure the transition balances the needs of the diverse stakeholders engaged in this work, I have assembled the following team:

- Deputy City Manager Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Assistant City Manager Rey Arellano, and Interim City Manager Shannon Jones will continue to serve as the Reimagining Public Safety leadership team, and former Deputy City Manager Michael McDonald remains an advisor to the team within the City Manager’s Office.
- Joyce James, who was contracted with the City of Austin’s Office of Equity (OOE) in May 2020 to provide a comprehensive review of the findings and recommendations of previous studies related to racial inequities in the Austin Police Department (APD), will be given an expanded and extended contract to implement the Texas Model for addressing racial inequities within APD. She will provide

strategic and administrative advice within the City Manager's Office to review and track recommendations that will ensure successful implementation of Reimagining Public Safety efforts.

- Office of Police Oversight Director Farah Muscadin serves as the lead on Resolution [20191205-066](#) and the work of Kroll & Associates, including progress on a Reimagined Police Cadet Academy.
- I have chosen Assistant Chief Joseph Chacon to serve as Interim Police Chief who will assume that role following Council confirmation. Assistant Chief Chacon began his career with APD in 1998 and served in various assignments including Director of the Austin Regional Intelligence Center, Investigations Bureau Chief, and Headquarters Bureau Chief. He currently serves as the Central Bureau Chief, which oversees the Downtown Area Command; Special Events, Parks and Lakes; and Special Operations.

I am confident that his team, alongside of our dedicated, professional men and woman of our Police Department, will ensure a smooth transition as we recruit and welcome our next Police Chief.

cc: Executive Team  
Chief Brian Manley, Austin Police Department  
Joya Hayes, Human Resources Director