

**Phoenix City Council
Public Safety and Justice (PSJ) Subcommittee
Summary Minutes
Wednesday, February 7, 2024**

City Council Chambers
200 W. Jefferson St.
Phoenix, Ariz.

Subcommittee Members Present
Councilwoman Ann O'Brien, Chair
Councilman Kevin Robinson
Councilman Jim Waring
Councilwoman Guardado

Subcommittee Members Absent

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman O'Brien called the Public Safety and Justice (PSJ) Subcommittee to order at 10:01 a.m. with Councilwoman Guardado, Councilman Kevin Robinson and Councilman Jim Waring present.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

Anne Ender expressed concern regarding Fire Department response times.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

1. Minutes of the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee Meeting

Councilman Waring made a motion to approve the minutes of the Jan. 3, 2023, Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee meeting. Councilman Robinson seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 4-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION (ITEM 2)

2. Fire Staffing, Ambulance Model, and Response Time Update

Chairwoman O'Brien introduced Executive Assistant Fire Chief Scott Walker and Assistant Fire Chief Ray Ochoa to present on this item.

Assistant Chief Walker provided an update on sworn staffing, hiring goals, hiring strategies, and training processes. He described recruitment efforts, the impact of affinity groups, future improvements to the testing process, and trends in sworn staffing levels.

Councilwoman Guardado asked about the difference between the number of applicants in 2015 and the number of applicants in 2023. She noted the City's population has increased, so the decrease in applicants is concerning.

Assistant Chief Walker stated the department is aware of this change in the number of applicants, and noted the pool of candidates continues to remain high. He described some of the steps the department is taking to improve the number of applicants.

Councilwoman Guardado asked if there is anything councilmembers can assist with to ensure the hiring pool increases.

Assistant Chief Walker stated the department is looking at all strategies, and he will send information to Council offices so they can assist in this process.

Councilwoman Guardado asked about the hiring challenges for the Fire department.

Assistant Chief Walker stated compensation has not been a hiring challenge, but the changing demographics of the workforce has. He stated competing with other careers can be difficult when work-life balance is a priority for candidates.

Councilwoman Guardado thanked staff for the information.

Councilman Waring expressed concern with the decrease in applicants, and recommended staff reach out to the Police Department and ask about their recent hiring efforts.

Assistant Chief Walker stated staff is monitoring this situation closely and noted the importance of attracting quality candidates. He stated investing in the community and preparing people for the job through mentorship is an important strategy to attract quality candidates.

Councilman Waring stated the downward trend in number of applicants has been consistent for many years was worrisome.

Assistant Chief Walker provided statistics on sworn staffing levels by month throughout 2023.

Councilman Waring stated the staffing level statistics were encouraging. He asked why all available positions were not filled during certain months of the year.

Assistant Chief Walker noted these gaps were due to attrition and the authorization to add new positions, as it takes time to train recruits to fill the vacant positions.

Councilman Waring asked despite inevitable retirements, if the Fire Department should expect to be fully staffed in the near future.

Assistant Chief Walker stated there is a pool of qualified applicants to be hired from, so positions are not vacant due to a lack of candidates. He stated any vacancies are due to the Fire Department adding positions.

Councilman Waring noted staff seems to be comfortable with the number of quality applicants.

Assistant Chief Walker stated while staff wants to continue to encourage a robust pool of candidates, they are satisfied with the number of quality applicants received.

Councilman Waring asked for data on how many applicants would be considered qualified candidates, how many of those candidates are eventually hired, and how many candidates accept a position with another city.

Assistant City Manager Lori Bays stated the Fire Department's vacancy rate is one and a half percent, as compared to 15 percent throughout the City.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked for data regarding how many applicants tested and moved to the qualified candidate list. She asked about the frequency of testing.

Assistant Chief Walker stated testing every six months would allow more candidates to apply and ensure qualified candidates are hired sooner. He provided statistics on staff demographics when compared to Maricopa County demographics. He discussed emergency response times and noted the times do not meet response time standards set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS), but staff is working diligently to address this issue.

Councilwoman Guardado expressed concern regarding the response times in District 5 and asked how many more firefighters and fire stations would be needed to meet the set standards.

Assistant Chief Walker stated staff would provide that information, and mentioned there is a 20-year forecast for response times based on future resources.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked for a future agenda item regarding the forecast and long-term staffing model.

Councilman Waring expressed concern with the length of response times in District 2.

Assistant Chief Walker stated the large geographic area in District 2 causes longer response times. He stated there are stations planned for District 2 within the future forecast, and leadership actively monitors data from the district to change strategy if needed. He stated staff must strike a balance between response times and call volume, and these statistics are being constantly monitored.

Councilman Waring stated the quality of services includes response times, so District 2 is receiving the poorest quality of service from the Fire Department, when compared to other districts.

Assistant Chief Walker stated response times are often a priority when forecasting for future needs of residents. He provided data on unit responses for each calendar year. He stated there was a 16 percent increase in transport activity levels in 2023 partially due to House Bill 2431. He stated the current ambulance model is unsustainable due to the increased demand for transports, and noted this number of transports is likely going to continue to increase.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked for an explanation of House Bill 2431.

Assistant Chief Walker explained this bill requires a higher level of scrutiny for emergency service providers to transport members of the public to the hospital. He discussed the program challenges under the current ambulance model and noted the current model has a high dependency on overtime. He stated the system as it exists today is not able to meet the growing needs in the City.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if staff planned to change the model to ensure less reliance on overtime.

Assistant Chief Walker described the current ambulance model and stated the ambulance program is revenue generating. He described a new proposed ambulance model that would convert 10 part-time ambulance units staffed with overtime to six full-time units to reduce reliance on overtime.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if the six part-time units left would be 12 hour shifts with 12 part-time positions needed every day.

Assistant Chief Walker stated yes, the system would still rely on those additional part-time units.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked what it would take for all part-time units to become full-time.

Assistant Chief Walker stated staff would look at the funding to provide that information. He stated even under the new model, there would still be a need for part-time units to address peak hours of demand.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if the new full-time units would be assigned to specific stations.

Assistant Chief Ochoa stated the ambulance units would be assigned based on a matrix of information including response times, call volume, and growth of the City. He mentioned units are moved around based on this information.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked how often this information is assessed.

Assistant Chief Ochoa stated due to the significant changes in response times, this information is evaluated every six months.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if this same matrix of information would determine if part-time and full-time units would need to be moved.

Assistant Chief Ochoa stated the position of part-time and full-time units is based on the data staff analyzes on a regular basis.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked how long this new model would take to implement.

Assistant Chief Walker stated it would take approximately a year to fully implement.

Councilwoman Guardado asked if new model went through the labor management process.

Assistant Chief Walker stated this new model was not created through the Relationships by Objective (RBO) process, but it was created in collaboration with the United Phoenix Firefighters Association (UPFFA) Local 493.

Councilwoman Guardado asked if this strategy was approved by the Labor Management Committee.

Assistant Chief Walker stated yes, leadership supported this new model.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked about how often part-time units are out of service due to absences.

Assistant Chief Walker stated eight percent of part-time ambulance shifts are affected by absences. He stated if the units were full-time, positions would be filled through forced-hiring. He provided an overview of the benefits of this model change. He stated staff's recommendation would be for the Public Safety and Justice Committee to recommend the approval of 34 new sworn full-time positions, to utilize 14 existing frozen sworn full-time positions, and four new non-sworn administrative full-time positions.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if this recommendation would be cost-neutral.

Assistant Chief Walker stated the Fire Department has budget capacity to absorb the costs of these positions.

Councilwoman Guardado stated support for this restructuring model and the associated benefits.

Chairwoman O'Brien thanked staff for their data-driven approach and responsible solutions.

Councilman Robinson made a motion to approve the item. Councilman Waring seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, 4-0.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION (ITEM 3)

3. Domestic Violence Prevention, Family Advocacy Center and Victim Services Update

Chairwoman O'Brien introduced Interim Human Services Director Nichole Ayoola, Deputy Human Services Director Kevin Mattingly, and Assistant Police Chief Ed Castro to present on item.

Mr. Mattingly discussed the services based at the Family Advocacy Center (FAC) and an overview of the FAC partners. He discussed the Victim Services Division (VSD) and their mission, focus, goals, and victim advocacy. He shared a success story regarding a woman using her safety plan. He described the role of a family liaison and the grants that fund the FAC. He described the plans to provide technology improvements and new services so the FAC can loan or gift them to victims as needed.

Assistant Chief DeCastro described the Police Department's SPIDR Project and the renovations at the FAC and the Family Investigations Bureau.

Mr. Mattingly discussed domestic violence prevention efforts from staff including events throughout 2023.

Assistant Chief DeCastro discussed the detective workload regarding domestic violence calls and domestic violence prevention efforts.

Mr. Mattingly discussed teen dating violence prevention and the previous efforts staff have made. He discussed the contract the City has through Teen Lifeline and the services offered,

Assistant Chief DeCastro discussed School Resource Officer (SRO) education and collaboration.

Chairwoman O'Brien thanked the Phoenix Police Foundation, the Winged Hope Center, and Angels on Patrol for their assistance in these efforts.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION (ITEMS 4-5)

4. Monthly Police Hiring, Recruitment, and Attrition Report

Information only. No Councilmember requested additional information.

5. CAP Hiring, Recruitment and Metric Report

Information only.

Councilman Robinson asked how many calls have been diverted from the Police Department to the Community Assistance Program (CAP).

Assistant Chief Ochoa stated 842 calls in 2023 were diverted to Behavioral Health Units.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Chairwoman O'Brien requested an update on the 20-year forecast long term staffing model for the Fire Department.

Councilman Waring asked for a breakdown of the reasons for calls for service and why some districts have twice as many calls as District 2.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairwoman O'Brien adjourned the meeting at 11:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chloe Baldwin
Management Fellow