

Public Safety Committee Meeting Transcript – 04/26/2021

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[2:04:19 PM]

>> Harper-madison: I think we'll go ahead and get started. All right. So a quorum of the city council public safety committee is present, so we're going to go ahead and call the meeting to order. So at 2:05 P.M., we are at

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Austin city hall. City councilmember mayor pro tem harper-madison, we are not in chambers, we are virtually meeting at 301 west second street. And we have a good size agenda today, including some briefings that I'm really looking forward to. Colleagues, I'm going to try to get us out of here on time. I know everybody has got a busy day ahead of them. So I have an agenda... It looks like the first thing we need to do is approve our minutes from the March 10th meeting. In which case I'm looking for a motion to approve minutes. Looks like councilmember Kelly motions to approve the minutes from the March 10th meeting with vice-chair Casar seconding. Can we take a vote on approval of the minutes for March 10th? Looks like we're all in favor with mayor Adler not present currently. We do however have the benefit of having councilmember Ellis with us

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this evening. So it looks like our first item after our agenda is a briefing. So briefing and discussion on the Austin area wildlife hub in regards to the wildlife preparedness report from '19. I'm assuming we have all staff lined. So who will be running the show for this one?

>> I will, mayor pro tem.

>> Thank you.

>> Good afternoon, mayor pro tem, council members, assistant city manager and other distinguished community members. I'm assistant chief de la Rosa with the Austin fire department in wildfire. I am going to take a few minutes to introduce and talk about the latest tool created to help support about the mission of fire resilience and how the city of Austin and the fire department are

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helping each other gain that resilience. We'll take five to 10 minutes and cover the who, why and the what of the Austin wildfire hub. I'm going to pass the mic over to division chief Carey Stewart who will talk to you about this.

>> Hi everyone, I'm Kerri Stewart, division chief for the wildfire division. It has been an honor to lead the wildfire division for the last year and a half and understand the wildfire divisions. The wildfire began in 2012 after the local wildfires in 2011 and works to reduce risk in the area and also reduce risk from community education which is our fire resilient communication, the resilience mission and fuel effectively mitigate wildfires, which is our effective firefighting response with our wildfire division. Those are the framework for the strategic planning for the division and the addition division is made up

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of uniform and civilian staff to achieve the goals while partnering with other departments across the city. Two members that are foundational to the mission of the division are Justice Jones and Nate Casper. Justice is our wildfire mitigation officer and has been with the division since its inception and has experience across the country as a fields coordinator and wild land interface coordinator before joining AFD. He is our GIS analyst and has been with the division for four years. Nate originally joined as Forrester and so he understands the practical application of the GIS that he is doing for us and is going to present today. Thank you for opportunity to present the hub and how it can help us positively affect some positive change for the community as we address the wildfire risk together.

>> Thank you, Kerri. Now we'll have Justice Jones, who she just mentioned, he will tell us why we have gone and created

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the hub.

>> Good afternoon, everyone. We're excited and honored to be here with you today. Thank you for that overview from chief Stewart on our strategy. As she mentioned I'm the wildfire mitigation officer and I help provide strategic leadership to the wildfire division and help chief Stewart in the implementation of our strategic plan. The hub originated because we needed a way to communicate our collective efforts as a division at the city, to the public, to our leadership and to our partners and we wanted to be transparent about the work that we were doing to prepare Austin for wildfire, but we are also not the only players at the table and we wanted to be able to highlight the important roles that our partners play in our fire awareness. The hub is as a result of that need and a need identified in our recent wildfire preparedness audit. So we decided on a platform that we felt added the

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greatest opportunity for collaboration and coalition building. You can put the information that you need as city leadership at your fingertips. We love to tell you the story about wildfire and great work that we're doing, but we also want to be able to show that you great great work any time you need to see more access it and the hub is designed to be able to do just that. It provides situational awareness of as I mentioned our ongoing mitigation activities. You can see where fuels mitigation is happening across the city and to some extent across the county because much of the wild land interface is owned by partner agencies so we have a shared responsibility. It can give you situation situational awareness of what's happening from a fire danger and wildfire standpoint. Our wildfire activity is accessible through the wildfire hub so that's useful for both the public and our firefighting and first responder community to center that one access point situational awareness. As you know, Austin is one

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of the highest risk municipalities in the country, the highest outside of California on the analysis that's used. And the hub is a great way to communicate with the public that the first step in taking action in preparing for wildfire is understanding what that risk is. And this makes that very accessible and individualized so you can enter your address and find out what your risk is and then that is coupled with solutions that should be used to prepare yourself, your community, your neighborhood, and the city and county. So it creates great continuity and collaboration across many of our partners and stakeholders. And also it hosts current activities and planned activities calendar so you can see what's scheduled out into the future related to wildfire preparedness and we're going to open that up to our partners and others to be able to access and communicate their story. I'll hand it back to you and be prepared for any

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questions.

>> All right. Thank you very much, justice. So that's hot we are and why we -- the who we are and why we started this. And he kind of touched on some of it. I'm going to go in and show you the what. It is an outwardly facing blog like they were talking about, a website that shows you everything. As our risk has become more educated to our community we wanted to give them the tools to know. So we start off as always with situational awareness. And this is the home splash page. You go down and you can see the entire state with the current observed as well as the forecast. It's going to go, it also links in and tells you the current status of all the counties' burn bans, what our fire danger ratings are as we go. This wildfire situational awareness is actually link understand not only with what we have reported, but also with satellite mapping. So you can see these little red spots here and actually zoom in are heat maps that were found through the satellite page. It links into our active

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incident page and you can see everything beyond wildfire and just what's going on. Sometimes things start off as a car fire that leads into that. So we wanted to make sure we have in that in there as well. Lots of information in here. I'm giving you the very topical 10,000-foot view. It has links to all the historical data that shows we're the fifth highest wildfire risk in the nation and it's got many of the applications and links to our partners of other city agencies besides the Austin fire department that are helping with the fight against wildfire and to increase the preparedness. You have the upcoming events calendar that justice mentioned and you'll see front and center is the wildfire symposium that we hope some of you will be joining us on wind, shameless plug. Going up to the top you will see what's my wildfire risk? This is a very easy tool that we like to show because it allows -- often a

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question is how are we in the city? This allows you to bring it up and you can either use the map function to go in and get down the granular view of what your risk is or actually put in your address in the address bar and it will show you whether you're a high, medium or low risk and that are the areas around you that you should be concerned about. The resilient landscape is what he is talking about. As justice mentioned this is our fuel mitigation project by our partners and throughout the city. It talks about broadcast prescribed fire, what it is, the shaded fuel breaks that many of y'all have in your districts or in your neighborhoods. And what it is before, after. Quick little frequently asked questions section as well as the homes by risk and the values that we've protected in the past. In the past year or so. You can get pretty granular

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on here. This will also show you the scheduled projects, the inprogress projects or the ones that have actually been completed. And you can click on each one of these and they'll come up with a little flyout that tells you more about each one. It's a great tool that shows you who is doing what and where. There's more dive-in here that will let you go to all these links and it's all live right now so you can each go and explore it as you will. The firewise community section is the leading -- leading the state right now. The city of Austin would recognized fire wise communities. It's the biggest bang for our buck is showing how our residents and people who are living out there or community members can harden their own homes there. That's the very first step in making our city the best prepared for event in wildfire. We all have our part to do

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as citizens as well as the fire department and our different city agencies. So at the very last you will see more about that and it shows you how to get involved with the communities in case you're nt always a fire wise community. It shows you how to get there. Around it's got a "Contact us" and "About us" that goes more into it. It is a great tool that is very much available and is what we're most proud of is it's a living document that allows us to customize it as the needs change or not only of city leadership, but of our community as well so we can give them the tools they need at their fingertips. We have the whole team here for any -- I'm sorry about that, I've lost my

[indiscernible], for any questions that y'all may

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have.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you very much and I really appreciate that presentation. There are a couple of folks who are not here -- never mind. I see councilmember alter has joined us and councilmember tovo. I know they were wanting to be present for this. In which case I'll move over to my colleagues. Are there any questions at this time? Councilmember Kelly?

>> Kelly: Thank you. And thank you for all the work that you all put into getting that hub put together. I know that situational awareness is very important in the community as well as education. I know that district 6 and district 10 have the highest risk of wildfires and I have two questions. My first is I noticed there wasn't a Spanish language option on the website so I was wondering if you were looking into maybe adding that. And then my second question is more about how you're educating the community on how to become fire wise. I know that river place in particular is a fire wise certified community, but I'd like to know about other efforts going on. So if you could answer those two, that would be great.

>> Wonderful, yeah. For the question about upcoming features and

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enhancements and bilingual status of that I will refer over to Nate who is the architect and Genous behind it. Nate?

>> Thank you, chief. I'm a member of staff with the Austin fire department. I'll quickly mention that -- perhaps I could share my screen. Maybe not. But if you go to the wildfire hub you'll see a little link on the left side of your screen. It's a translate button. And it will translate the enhub to any language. Letting people know about that functionality is something that we're working on making these features available. And I'll let justice Jones, our fire mitigation officer, talk about our fire wise program to encourage people to adopt the fire wise program through the city. Thank you.

>> Thank you for that great question. We're very proud to be one of the communities with the most active fire wise

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program in the country and certainly there N the state. We lead the state with a number of nationally recognized fire wise communities. One of the mechanisms that we do to facilitate the expansion of that program is we formed an alliance of all of our 20 fire wise communities in the city of Austin and they each have ambassadors that help share information, create a multiplier effect to get information out to the communities. And we invite other members into that alliance so they're not reinventing the wheel. They can learn from other community members that have experience and ensuring their communities are fire adapted. But we don't stop there. Mechanisms like the annual wildfire symposium are a great way for us to recruit and mentor new and prospective fire wise communities. We work with our partners at Texas A&M forest service and Travis county to include other communities in the county and our fire wise alliance so we're actually helping our neighbors and

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adjoining communities mitigate wildfire risk as well. And we train those community representatives in the fire wise alliance to be able to conduct home risk assessments for neighbors and other community members that creates a multiplier and a leveraging effect. It's one of the only fire wise alliances in the nation and it's been really an effective grassroots approach. We also rely heavily on the feedback of community leadership and many of our requests are at the behest of community leaders like yourself, identifying a need in the community that's willing and wanting to take action to reduce wildfire risk. If.

>> Thank you, Nate. Thank you, council.

>> Colleagues, are there any other questions? Councilmember Ellis and then councilmember alter.

>> Thank you, mayor pro tem. This is a really exciting hub. There's lots of good information ton digested on it.

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Can talk to me a little bit about your group's involvement with some of the brush debris pickup from the storm? I know we've been talking to resource recovery because because there are individuals in our community that still have piles of dead brush they're trying to get moved. Are you collaborating with them or can you provide any insight for people who may be worried about this, especially as temperatures are already hitting 90 degrees, can you talk to me a little bit about that?

>> Yes, ma'am. We've been working with all our city partners from the very beginning. Well, we were a little busy during the event itself, but we were right after in that remediation and recuperation afterwards we've been meeting with them in a different advising capacity and information capacity. So last Monday we had an additional meeting that was with Austin resource recovery, Austin water, pard, as well as Austin energy, and we're all working in a collaborative way, the way the Austin fire department is more efficient and best able to help is

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we're working with our partners when they identify an area that has a big area of concern due to perhaps a large amount of dead and down, we'll go out there and they'll share the addresses with us and we'll go out and evaluate that to see the criticality of that concern. Additionally we are also keeping up with the situational awareness for all our partners as well as our citizens and residents with what we call the dead fuel moisture. We have the live fuel moisture for things that are still growing in there. What we did see during the winter storm, lots of our fuel fell down on the road and got disconnected. We have a way of taking our weather station and calculating and utilizing the tools that we have in that system to see how probability -- how high the probability of ignition of those different fuels are P the bigger branches. So it's much like firewood. When you you cut it down it takes awhile to cure.

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We're keeping an eye on that, sharing that concern with our partners so that we can sew owe since everyone has a limited amount of resources we're helping prioritize on those areas and keep a situational awareness for our responding fire stations in that area and the communities in case it starts to become dry. Right now they're still very moist and we've got some time to address this problem

before it becomes a criticality. So we're working with them in to identify the risks to keep everyone aware, as well as where we can, we go in and help our different landowners and partners.

>> That's really helpful, thank you.

>> Harper-madison: Councilmember alter.

>> Alter: Thank you, mayor pro tem. Before I ask my question, I just wanted to flag for councilmember Ellis and for anyone else we've been working really hard on this issue trying to address the downed debris from the

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storm. We worked with arr to convene that meeting on Monday. And if your staff wants to connect up with my staff, we welcome your educationment and involvement in that process. We've also been working with Austin energy of you as well. There were a lot of downed limbs and stuff from the work that happened during the storm that did not get picture up and we've worked out a mechanism for getting that debris picked up and some protocols for how to get that information out to folks appropriately under the circumstances. And just broadly I was really pleased to see the teams working together and focusing on it. As the chief mentioned, the assumption at the moment is that we have a little bit of time to get the situation under control, but I will say that as you are likely aware in your district, which will be similar to mine, there is still a lot

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of debris in our greenbelts and parks and elsewhere. Maybe not as much as we feared, but still quite a bit that has the potential to turn into a powder keg if we do not address the situation. And so we're trying on many fronts to do that and I would invite you to connect up with my office if you want to advance those efforts. And in terms of my question on the hub, you know, I think a really important part of preventing wildfire is awareness and preparedness. And so I appreciate this work. I was wondering if you could go into more detail on how your fuels mitigation efforts are reflected on the website and, you know, just any more updates that you can provide about those efforts more generally.

>> Yeah. We could do a deeper dive into the mitigation and fire

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resilient landscape section. Nate, if you would kind of talk about it, I'll drive the hub. I'll start sharing my screen and translate it back to English. I hope everyone -- I tried doing that while we had them talking. But there will be another way to share that translation.

>> Thank you, chief. So a big part of the catalyst for us creating the hub is for us to be able to create a mechanism for our partners to be able to self-report on their efforts. As you know, approximate Austin fire department doesn't actively manage any land but we help our partners within the city to manage publicly owned property. And so within the resilient landscapes tab of the hub we've created a robust database that our partners that do manage Austin public lands can self-report on their mitigation activities. So it's not only the Austin fire department who manages the data that goes into this Hupp, it's our partners as well. So on the map that chief de

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la Rosa has shown, you can see mitigation projects throughout the city, not only mitigated by the Austin fire department, but Austin parks and rec, public works and Austin energy who have a role to play in fire. I've empowered them with their gis analyst group with an opportunity to input data into this system. We have a robust mechanism for identifying areas that need treatment and over the past year our fuels crew has gone out and actually with boots on the ground assessed many of these areas, over 843 areas for it's depth of fuel and its ability to be treated. And so out of the 843 that we've assessed in the past year we've found 525 sites that could benefit from a fuels reduction treatment.

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So the work is ongoing. If you look at the graphs you'll see that there are potential treatment Zones within each of the 10 council districts. And I should also meanings mention that we manage manage city of Austin land outside of council districts that we're responsible for. So we finally have this mechanism to report out on our progress and to maintain a living document of the work that's being done in realtime. Thank you.

>> Alter: And can you also show the part where it ranks the council districts by risk and -- I don't know if the same page talks about the property that's at risk.

>> So right here is the treatable acres by council district. Then up here is the acres treated by council district. So you'll see that these are the difference areas that are the potential treatment

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Zones and so your total on the bottom of what we've done so far. And then those are the active, the graphical interface up there. Is there another aspect that you want to clarify?

>> Alter: I think it was just a statement was made earlier about the council district with highest risk and I thought it was district 8 and then 10 and 6.

>> So there's the treatable acres here by -- by the potential treatment Zones and it's 8, 2, 10, 1, 5 and 6 and it goes down. And this --

>> Alter: I'm talking about the mass that you used to have where the risks were as opposed to the treatable land because we may not have a lot of treatable land, but we may be at high risk for wildfire and --

>> So chief de la Rosa, if you would go to the "About

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us" section, there are resources at the bottom. In 2019 we created a very robust wildfire risk reports by council district and those are available within this now the public to see. It's there on the right. Chief de la Rosa.

>> By district.

>> And councilmember alter is right, district 8 is ranked highest among the 10 districts for wildfire risk, followed closely by district 6 and district 10. And district 1 and 2 are closely behind them. So we've quantified wildfire risk by what we call community response area. And this helps us prioritize our treatment work and our community work throughout the city and helps us better strategically plan and prepare for wildfire. But there is significant pockets of risk scattered throughout the city, which our wildfire risk, high

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resolution model for our risk map can show.

>> Alter: Mayor pro tem, maybe in a future public safety meeting at an appropriate time when we have time on the agenda that they can dive into some of these risks by district. I had asked multiple times to get this presented to council and we never really had the opportunity and there's a huge amount of information there. It was distributed I think only as kind of backup and it was brought when we made increases to their budget, but one of the challenges we have is that we have not communicated the threat as well as we might. And part of that is communicating that threat to council and understanding that, you know, we have risk areas all around the city. There's kind of like a ring and then it's also concentrated in 1, 2, 8, 6 and 10. But if any of those districts were to catch on fire to could easily spread

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and all sorts of -- in all sorts of directions. And one of the questions that I have been repeatedly asking is, you know, are we prepared, have we done enough to mitigate the risk given what we know about, you know, the risks that are out there and what is at stake both in terms of property and people and how this could impact our city. So I appreciate this step of the transparency. I think it's important. I would invite my colleagues to share this information out with your constituents. I have several members of my district who are very active in fire wise and are leading some of that alliance work. And we've been working to support their efforts. It's really an important tool. It's an all hands on deck situation with respect to wildfire, and I think the tools that are provided for firewise are very, very

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important. We had an audit a couple of years ago of wildfire issues through the auditor's office. And in the next couple of months we'll be asking them to report on -- in audit and finance we'll be asking them to report on the progress that we've made in fulfilling the recommendations that were in that audit. But I think it's really, really important that as we enter into our discussions about storm uri and its aftermath that storm uri was a low probability, high impact event. And wildfire is a high probability, high impact event and so we need to be making sure that we are doing everything we can to prepare. And other colleagues who are interested in pushing on this along with me, I would love to hear from you and engage. We've made some good progress, but there's a lot more to be done, so thank you.

[2:34:53 PM]

>> Harper-madison: I absolutely agree. Right before you said that I thought that I should let councilmember Fuentes and her staff know to watch the presentation we just got, but it makes a lot of sense for me to have a follow-up that's a deeper dive. So we'll get in touch with your offices when planning the next agenda and I will add the list of considerations for future items. Anybody else who has a hand? Councilmember Casar.

>> Casar: I know we're tight on time, but I want to second what councilmember alter has said and the more that the staff or manager can present also what it would be like for our city to experience what is again a high probability/high impact event, just because it's better for us to have that information upfront and for community members to start hearing more about it than for us to be figuring it out in the middle of that kind of a disaster. So I second that it would be

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useful in a public setting for you to walk people through what it would be like in that moment. And again, of course all the preventive work is really critical, but for people to better have a sense of what that would be like and what our plans would be.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you, councilmember Casar. You said in a more public setting. Do you mean this committee or the council?

>> Casar: I'll leave it for you to think through the best setting for that conversation.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you. I appreciate that. Councilmember alter and then councilmember Ellis.

>> Alter: I just want to say if the will is to do it in a full council, I certainly think that the issue merits it. It's just been really hard to get it on the agenda, but if my colleagues also see the value, if not, I just think we really do have to continue to raise awareness and help people to understand the resources that are available for them so that they can best prepare and protect their own families and their

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communities.

>> Harper-madison: Councilmember Ellis and then mayor Adler.

>> Ellis: Thank you, mayor pro tem. Very quickly, I would also be interested to know about public engagement opportunities. I know we all have different districts and different needs. And I think if you could reach out to my office, if the other offices would be interested, I know I have constituents who would really love to know more about how to protect themselves and their neighborhoods and that could be another opportunity where we get the message out farther and wider to be able to share this information because we know you can't clear every bit of underbrush yourselves, but we have community members that are very invested and very eager to learn more about it.

>> We'll have our fire adaptive community and public engagements

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>> Harper-madison: Mayor Adler?

>> Mayor Adler: Chair and councilmember alter, I'll work with you to get this in front of the full council.

>> Harper-madison: Councilmember Kelly, did I see your hand?

>> Kelly: I just said me too. Thank you. I'd be happy to help with that.

>> Harper-madison: Awesome. Thank you. Are there any other questions? Hearing none, I have just a couple of brief questions. I worked what the implications of the annual symposium are? Is that a good opportunity for us to do a more sort before community-wide education effort or is that -- can you talk to me a little bit that symposium and what the goal?

>> Yes, ma'am. The symposium is an annual event that's open to anyone and all. We have a large mailing list that goes out, out to many of y'all's offices as well. And that symposium is attended by a multitude of

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the recipients there. It's an online one. And I will pass it to justice who is kind of running the symposium side and he will be able to share more of the details who has currently attended and how we spread the information about.

>> Thank you, chief. And this is the ninth year for us putting on a wildfire symposium. We've committed to being nimble when we plan these events to address current issues as they're arising in our community or issues that we want to make our community aware of. This year we'll feature national level speakers to talk about our national cohesive strategies. Partners about how the state is assisting to work with communities to become fire adapted. Our municipal level with councilmember alter and myself, as well as the grassroots overview from a community perspective. So we're trying to help people understand the continuity of our efforts from a national level down

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to the individual responsibility. And as a follow-up in this new virtual environment, we're planning a series of lunchtime lectures as an extension of the symposium to host keynote speakers, relevant topics. That's a lot more

[indiscernible] Than our annual symposium that we have in advance. It now gives us an opportunity to talk about issues as they arise, like storm uri that's changed things and we'll pivot because of that. So it gives us ability to have that ongoing dialogue with communities in addition to many other mechanisms we use. That's just one of them.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you. I appreciate that. I wonder if there's an opportunity for those to align with us-- we host a series of meetings for our constituents so I wonder if there's an opportunity to make that effort align with some of our town halls. Smalt? Councilmember alter.

[2:40:58 PM]

>> Alter: So I totally encourage councilmember Ellis and mayor pro tem on those ideas of bringing it out to the community. I've been trying to encourage them to do that with council for a long time and that we can be partners. So I love that you guys are volunteering that. I want guys to know that may 1st is national wildfire preparedness day. I'm going doing a proclamation for that at the symposium, but it is a great opportunity to amplify what you can in the coming week about wildfire preparedness. I have a newsletter that will probably be going out tomorrow on stuff and you can borrow from that if you'd like. But it is national wildfire preparedness day and as we move into this hotter summer area, really do welcome everyone joining their voices in this effort to help our community be prepared.

[2:42:00 PM]

>> Harper-madison: Okay. Well, thank you. Are there any other questions? All right well, you guys have a good rest of your day. We really appreciate the information that you brought forward and it sounds like we'll be seeing you again soon. Thank you.

>> Thank y'all.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you, everyone.

>> Harper-madison: All right. So next up it looks like we'll have a briefing on -- an update on the joint memorandum from the Austin police department and the office of police oversight on improvements to police misconduct informations and processes. And so I don't have my handy list in front of me at the moment, but my assumption is is that we're going to have interim chief Chacon and office of police oversight director Farah muscadin that looks like who we have to present for us this morning. Welcome.

>> Thank you, mayor pro tem and committee members. Good

[2:43:03 PM]

afternoon. He Joseph Chacon, interim chief of police. I'm happy to be here with director muscadin presenting on the joint memorandum of understanding between APD and the office of police oversight. Director muscadin and I worked on this together and issued it late last week. The memo was requested by councilmember Casar during the March 25th council meeting when I was confirmed as the interim chief of police with asking that the go departments review our relationship and determine if there were areas where we could renew our commitment to fair, unbiased and complete investigations of complaints against APD officers. It verifies each department's needs from the other and where that collaborative partnership could be strengthened so that in the end we achieve the goal of complete and

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unbiased investigations. This this document is still in a draft form and we continue to collaborate on the final product but it will be do many of the things that we're looking for, including laying out the roles and responsibilities for each department in complaint process. The timelines that each department must abide by. And importantly a process for conflict resolution when there is disagreement on the direction a complaint should take if the two departments cannot initially agree. I strongly believe that this will improve the overall working relationship between the two departments as well as the work product produced by the internal affairs division at the end. Another specific question asked by councilmember Casar during the March 25th meeting was if I was willing to reaffirm that commitment to ask relevant questions that are posed by the opo

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during internal affairs investigations. This is really a matter that's dictated by the 2018apa meet and confer and one to which we should be abiding. And so this is confirmed in this memorandum as well. The process for determining whether a question is relevant or not is going to be spelled out in that joint sop. Additionally in accordance with council resolution 2020-0611-095, which directed the opo to have input into general order divisions related to use of force matters and overall internal investigations, I have committed in the memorandum to have collaborative review with the opo on these revisions. And we have actually already begun that process. All of these things are being committed to by both departments for the purpose of creating greater transparency with the public that we serve and this will result in greater accountability and trust

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with that community. I will of course be staying on to answer questions, but I wanted to take a quick break here to allow director muscadin to provide any opening comments that she might have as well.

>> Good afternoon, mayor pro tem, council members. I'm again happy to be here to present this joint memorandum with chief Chacon. I hope this signals to you a new direction that we are going in that will hopefully sustainably be more collaborative in the

long-term: From the opo perspective this is a welcomed will be collaboration and we've hit several brick walls through our work and I do think that particularly with the type of work that we do, collaboration with the police department is -- is a benefit to us all and so as much as that door can remain open and be opened and that

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we work collaboratively together, not to the point where we agree on everything because we won't, but fundamentally having a foundation of collaboration I think is important for the greater goal of, you know, equitable policing for our community. So I do -- I am very much appreciative of this joint memo and the new leadership with chief Chacon. Apologize for my dog.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you very much, director muscadin and chief Chacon. Colleagues, do you have any questions? Councilmember Casar?

>> Casar: Well, thank you both for your work on this and thank you, chief, because it was an early question that day of your confirmation and I appreciate you getting back with us so quickly on it given all the things that you have going on. As far as those joint stand operating procedures, what is the timeline on those?

>> The timeline we've laid out in the memos is to have

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this done this week. I am certainly hopeful that we will be able to meet that deadline. Of course, we at the police department have a number of issues that are -- that we're working on and I know that director muscadin and her office have a number as well. So I want to be able to get back together with her this week to kind of they'll down the final things in that joint sop, but I would say that the majority of it is done. And we feel very good about where we are jointly on that, and of course, once we both finish it and have had some input from city manager's office to make sure that they're comfortable with everything that we're doing, that will be shared through -- I'm sure that director muscadin is going to put it on her website and it will be shared directly with mayor and council.

>> Casar: Great. While I really appreciate the commitment to asking the questions as laid out in the

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meet and confer agreement and those other issues really, you know, obviously the conflict resolution and the standard operating procedure is where a lot of it really happens. And so once y'all are done with that, and I understand if you have to take your time to get it done right. Once you're done with it if there are any significant divergents between either of you, if you would let us know about that, that would be helpful. I'm not looking for disagreement, but it's helpful to know where -- how any disagreement is resolved because it seems like you all energy full agreement here on the issues -- all in full agreement on the issues in the memo and that's really promising and I appreciate that. Any sense yet on when a question is -- when there's a dispute about whether a question is relevant or not how that might be -- how that might be handled in the way to make sure that we don't miss out on a relevant question?

[2:50:12 PM]

In an internal affairs interview?

>> I'm sorry, I didn't --

>> Casar: I was explaining when I said a question I was sort of vague. You know what I mean. When an internal affairs investigation, the opo has an additional question or two that they would like asked, but it's unclear whether that question is determined to be relevant and there's a dispute about whether it's relevant, do we have yet a process coming to make sure that we are asking all relevant questions?

>> So there is going to be a process that's laid out in the joint sop for that very issue, determining the relevancy of questions. And if there is -- because again as director muscadin actually alluded to, there won't always be agreement between the two offices. There will be a process for kind of appealing it up the chain of command so that ultimately even if we need to go to the director level, which would be myself and Farah, to determine what that relevancy is that we

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have that conversation and then make a decision.

>> Casar: Thank you.

>> Harper-madison: Councilmember alter.

>> Alter: Thank you. I just wanted to say that I really welcome this renewed cooperation and collaboration, so thank you, director muscadin and chief Chacon for taking this on and thank you to councilmember Casar for opening space for those conversations to happen quickly. In this time period. So thank you.

>> Harper-madison: Colleagues, are there any other questions? Councilmember Casar?

>> Casar: And then I also appreciate the -- thank you for that, councilmember alter. And chief, I also appreciate the commitment here on trying to treat external and internal complaints equally, as equally as possible. Are there particular shifts that we're contemplating making to ensure that those

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external community complaints are vetted as thoroughly as possible?

>> I'll go ahead and kick that off if you would like, and then director muscadin can kind of talk about her process as well. But the initial vetting of the complaints actually come in through the opo and then she advances those that she still has questions about and ones that she has not been able to resolve as either not having merit. Maybe she has reviewed body worn camera video from the officer and can

determine that the incident did not occur and then she would close those out directly with a complaint complain ain't.

-- Complainant, but then those Sha that she has questions about approximate about will bescransed. And what the sop is going to then say is that investigations are presumed unless there is-- there are mitigating factors that are

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brought up that would indicate -- that would bring whatever the allegation is into question. So I think that is the way that we're really looking at it to say we're putting the same time afterward effort into every complaint regardless of whether it's an external or internal complaint and making sure that there's concurrence from both departments on that.

>> Yeah. What I would add to that is the preliminary review is something new that we have instituted. We started in 2019. And primarily it was to engage our complaint staff on the front end of all complaints that come into the office. And so, for example, we may get 50 calls, emails or some sort of complaints that come into our office on a monthly basis and only forward about maybe 10 notices of formal complaints. So complaints that should initiate an investigation. So it is that 10 that we want to see investigated

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because historically what we've seen the last couple of years is that only about 20% of those have been investigated. And so I think the presumption is appropriate. I can give you an example where we received a complaint about a specific officer. We sent it down for complaint. When internal affairs looked into it further, that particular officer worked for a completely different law enforcement agency. So that ended that complaint. It did not move forward into any further investigation. Ia provided that information to that and it was done. So that is an example of where additional information would show that a full on investigation would not be warranted. And we understand those circumstances, but we feel very strongly that complaints from the community, particularly after they've gone through a preliminary review of our office, should be investigated.

>> Casar: And that's what's committed to here in this memo essentially.

>> Yes, and the sop.

[2:55:19 PM]

>> Casar: Thank you, both.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you, both. Real quick, councilmember Kelly, I'm going to -- I want to make sure I didn't write this wrong. Director muscadin, did you say 20%?

>> It's roughly between about 20 to 25%.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you very much. Councilmember Kelly?

>> Kelly: Thank you, mayor pro tem. And thank you for explaining this update to us. I really appreciate it. I'm just wondering how it's been communicated to the officers that this change has happened and if you've gotten any feedback from them about the change.

>> Yes. We're -- the first step of course is communicating it directly with our investigators so that they understand the focus of the memo. I think where the confusion can be for our officers is that there's going to be a wholesale change into the way that we do things. And I want to -- I want to kind of be clear that this is really a reaffirmation of the commitment that we have made through the process

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that's laid out by meet and confer and by chapter 143. So we cannot go outside of the contract. We cannot go outside of state law when it comes to the investigations. However, I think a lot of the contention has been around the investigative process and how some of those decisions have been made after opo input. And whether or not there's, for instance, relevancy to questions. Many times that decision was made at kind of at the investigation level, and it didn't go any further than that. And that has been -- you know, that has been a complaint. So in the joint sop, for instance, this would give dined of appeal process for the opo to say, well, maybe this investigator doesn't think it's relevant, but does the supervisor think it's relevant? And to escalate that a little bit to see whether

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there is going to be merit to asking a question. And you know, some of the other things that I talked about, those are all things that either have been -- we've already been doing and we're reaffirming on the part of the input into our general order revisions, that was a -- that was actually a 2019 resolution. And -- or I'm sorry, a 2020 resolution. So those are things that we are simply putting into process to make sure that we are doing what has been asked of us and continue to do those things.

>> Kelly: Thank you for explaining that. I want to ensure that whenever we make a change that we're able to get positive buy-in from the officers so that they don't feel like they're being mismanaged or having something pulled out from under them. With the change I want to ensure that we go about it the right now so they're fully educated on why the change is happening.

[2:58:22 PM]

>> Of course.

>> Thank you.

>> If I could add, I also think it's an opportunity to reeducate officers about our role in what we do because I think there's a lot of misinformation there. So I obviously welcome that opportunity to talk to officers. Before the pandemic I did that quite a bit. I do hear that as well, council member.

>> Kelly: Thank you very much.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you all. Are there any other questions, colleagues? Okay. In that case I do have a few of my own. The question around communication with officers from councilmember Kelly piqued my interest in which case I sort of wonder when that communication happened. I'd like to get some sort of distinction between what comes from APD and what comes from Apa in terms of information around

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acclimating to new processes.

>> Certainly. So so the Apa sort of works on their own schedule and will determine based on their leadership and Ken Cass day, when he wants to deliver messages to his membership. We don't really dictate that at all. We like to be kept in the loop. At the same time, we keep them in the loop when we're getting ready to communicate things out as well. So I actually had a conversation last week with Ken to discuss the issuance of this memo and what was going to be in it. The memo was shared with the internal affairs work group last week. Once the memo had issued to go ahead and have some discussion and make sure the people understood what it is and what it isn't. And then for the general membership, that has been an ongoing process. Since I kind of started a month

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ago, I've been in front of groups of officers on a very consistent basis to talk about all types of things related to the police department and, you know, not to mention the issues around staffing, around these type of issues related to internal affairs investigations and just other things that can really weigh on morale. And trying to answer those, trying to have good open forums where people have an opportunity to air their opinions and perhaps criticisms without any kind of fear of retaliation for anything like that. So that has been ongoing and will continue and I was just talking to Ken today about addressing the membership next week.

>> Thank you. I appreciate that. It's one of my greater regrets. During the course of this

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reimagining public safety conversation, so many things were taken out of context and so many things -- a lot of assumptions were made and reimagining public safety, at some point we were only talking about law enforcement. It's as though we forgot we have other agencies that provide public safety services and then it also became extremely politicized to the point where, I mean, just to think about some of the absurdities, right? One day I got called a boot liqueur and hate cops in one day. How can you be both? A lot of folks by way of a lack of clear communication, we're put in a position where they had to pick a sides. Pick a sides don't benefit our community at large. I had asked early on during the reimagining process if I could address the body. For whatever reason and eventually it was covid. It just never happened.

[3:02:25 PM]

And in hindsight, I really do wish that we had had more opportunities to have councilmembers address the general body as opposed to the messages trickling down. Inevitably, it became a game of telephone. Where it was told in rank and file wasn't what we said at all. I look forward as we continue to evolve these processes, I look forward to your leadership and helping myself, my colleagues do a better job of having clear communication with rank and file. I think it's so important for them directly to understand exactly what's going on. I keep getting these calls and emails from constituents that say X and O is happening in my neighborhood. Even though it's illegal. When I talked to police officer so-and-so. They told me because council cut their budget, I needed to call them to complain. While I can imagine that there

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are some officers who are sort of make evolutions around that professionalism and how they interact with our constituents, my guess is that most aren't saying those things. So I think a lot of our ability to really just bring everybody back together for the conversation as opposed to these -- we're all -- fragmented, so to speak. I think this is one of those conversations where us being transparent and honest and letting people know what the process is as we go through it, will be very helpful. So again, I look forward to your leadership and acm -- making sure we're communicating well both on our end and on leadership's end. That's both APD leadership and Apa leadership. Along those lines, I wonder, how often or if it's possible for you all to coordinate your efforts to bring new information to the members?

[3:04:28 PM]

>> As a matter of fact, I'm meeting that -- -- that meeting next week is going to be in front of the Apa membership. So we are coordinating our efforts a little bit as far as providing open forums for officers to be able to interact directly with the chief and executive staff and to ask whatever -- it's unscripted. Whatever questions they would like to ask or issues to bring up, we make ourselves available. A lot of times we don't see eye to eye on some of the messaging being put out because I think that each of the two departments, you know, whether we're talking about APD And Apa, have their own role and so for us, it is the good orderly running of the department that we would like to see and for the Apa, it is very much in the vein of advocating for their membership and making sure that

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what they see is as rights and privileges are not lost. And sometimes those can run in conflict with one another. So -- but I will say that I enjoy a very good working relationship with the leadership at the Apa. We talk on almost a daily basis about various issues going on. And the vast majority are resolved at our level with no public commentary or any kind of dissension or anything like that. We can usually address - - usually, they're around personnel issues that we're able to address fairly quickly. But to your point, mayor pro tem, I think they would love to see you and for you to get in front of the officers, whether on the -- as an APD event or Apa event. I know that they would love to be able to talk to you.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you. I appreciate that it's an

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opportunity we should offer all the councilmembers. I suppose it's covid-related. But my attempts to do right with pd and fd were canceled -- I think this might be the next best way for us to really get some one-on-one time. In which case, that meeting next week is open to APD leadership. Is it also open to council or something we should consider off line as the propriety?

>> Because it's not our meeting. We take it off line and -- you know, I know that they would love to hear from you.

>> Harper-madison: I appreciate that. Thank you very much. Councilmember Kelly?

>> Yes. I was just going to say, I have plans to attend the meeting on the 6th. If you'd like, I can see if it would be good for all of us to go. We'll work on that.

>> Harper-madison: Not all of us. Quorum.

>> Sorry.

>> Harper-madison: I'd be happy to join you.

[3:07:29 PM]

As we were speaking, I got an invitation to attend the June meeting. I'll accept that meeting as well. Colleagues, are there any other questions? Councilmember alter?

>> Chief, before we started talking about your meeting with officers via the EPA meetings, you're also talking about going out, talking more to groups of officers. Can you speak to a little bit about what you're doing in that regard and the change that's involved in that? I'm asking because I think it was one of the things I heard from some officers over time was a desire to have more of those interactions and to hear more from leadership. I appreciate you doing it and would like to know a little bit more.

>> Certainly. One of the things that I made a commitment to the -- all of our officers of all ranks, was to be a very good communicator. To that end, I have been sending out consistent messaging related

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to bigger issues that our department might be experiencing. The reimagination process is, of course, one of the issues that they have a great interest in. Our staffing, reallocations that we're being forced to do, do staffing shortages is another area they have a lot of interest in. Of course, that's the email communication which, to me, is the least effective. But it is a form where I can get a message to every single person. I do video messaging on a regular basis. Then I'm also meeting with individual groups of officers, whether in a shift setting for a patrol shift as they're going out or I just met with the homicide unit not too long ago to discuss the work that they've been doing and then answer these type of questions and just have good discussion. I'm meeting with the robbery unit next week. So there's -- I'm taking all the opportunities that I can, especially for our officers that

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are working really, really hard right now on the issues that are affecting our city and public safety to not only answer questions but to offer my gratitude. Because what they are doing is just incredible work that goes on behind the scenes where we are -- we have one of the highest homicides solve rates in the country. We are putting a lot of effort into working with our state -- local state and federal partners on cases involving gun violence, which I've been talking about for a little while now to make sure that we start to drive those numbers down. There's lots of good things going on. I want to recognize those people and visit with them. Also, open it up to anyone who wants to show up and talk about things going on in the department. The feedback I've been getting has been very good. They've been very appreciative.

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>> Harper-madison: All right. If there's nothing else, I believe you all can get back to your day. We really appreciate the opportunity. You know what, I had one more question. I'm sorry. I meant to ask earlier, you and director muscadin both acknowledge that ideology will be different. There will be differences of opinion. I did want to find out whether or not generally everybody is on the same page about the need to move forward with this consideration. How to best go about making the transition. While I recognize there will be some difficulty getting there, I just want to make sure we're all on the same page that we need to get there.

>> I don't know whether director muscadin has left the meeting or not. I can certainly speak for myself and say that I've appreciated -- I've been working with director muscadin for a number of years now in her role as the director

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of police oversight. I see a need and value in police oversight. I am glad to say that I feel like we're moving in a good positive direction to kind of make it so that we're not having these conflicts. I mean, I think that has been one of the biggest issues in moving the effort forward is trying to resolve each role for each department. The timelines involved. All of the things that I was talking about that we're going to lay out in the joint sops that will be so important to move the effort forward. So for my part, I would agree that I'm very glad to be having this conversation right now. And I'll turn it over to director muscadin. I see her now. To be able to go ahead and provide her comments as well.

>> No. I agree wholeheartedly. In 2018, when I had to do all

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the research on oversight and I spoke to all the oversight directors, one key difference was those -- my colleagues that had a good working relationship with the chiefs and those that did not. And it was very obviously beneficial in the work and in reaching the outcomes that communities obviously wanting to see, when that was -- there was a more collaborative communication and understanding between the oversight lead and the chief of police. And so already in this month that interim chief has been there. We've communicated pretty much weekly. I speak to him directly. His approach in terms of resolving conflicts and communicating with me directly, I appreciate that. And I appreciate his approach. Obviously, you know, we're going to disagree. It's the nature of the work, but I think what is different is chief Chacon's -- really coming from a place that I've seen

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already, a place of compromise, which I think is kind of where we need to be. But, you know, again, Joe and I, when he was ac over ia, we disagreed about cases all the time. But we left our disagreement there. We understood our perspectives and we kept it moving. I think between us, we already have the foundation for that relationship because we have worked closely when he was the ac over internal affairs. I think we're taking that forward and to really wipe the slate clean and starting in a more positive direction between opo and APD.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you very much. I appreciate that and I appreciate the collaborative approach and the candor. I really think it's awesome that y'all are providing that really good example for everybody to be able to have courageous difficult conversations but move forward under the guise of doing what's best for our community. Thank you both. We appreciate your time. Have a good rest of your day.

[3:14:39 PM]

Actually, chief Chacon, you might as well stay on. I think you're up again. The next -- our next agenda item is a discussion about Austin police department and our district representative program. I'm certain you all have heard from your constituents like we have heard from our constituents. Questions, concerns, comments, et cetera and so we really just wanted to have the opportunity to get a good handle on what's going on, who's who, what's what. It looks as though sergeant Davis has joined us. And -- all right. Sergeant -- there's somebody else back there. I don't know who that is. Somebody -- I was told.

>> What I'd like to do is kick it off a little bit. I'll introduce lieutenant Davis in just one moment. But this is really to provide the committee an update on where we are with our district representative program. I am very pleased once again to provide an update on this very

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worthwhile effort. You know, I was one the original district reps with our department in the late 1990s. So I fully understand the value that our community has for this program. The feedback that I received then and which I continue to receive is that community members feel that the -- are the personal police officers because of the close working relationship they have with our community. I'm going to turn it over to lieutenant Lee Davis, who will be providing an overview of the current state of our Dr program, including changes that are required by the initial reallocation that occurred in late January to address staffing shortages. I will stay on for the duration of the presentation and will be available to help answer additional questions at the end. Lieutenant Davis?

>> Okay. Real quick, before I begin, will they share my screen or will they be controlling the powerpoint?

[3:16:40 PM]

Okay. It's technically up to you. If you would rather drive the presentation yourself?

>> I'd rather share my screen.

>> Okay.

>> There we go.

>> So we can see now.

[3:17:41 PM]

>> What screen are --

>> Can you guys see my screen?

>> We're getting some feedback. It sounds like you have two microphones activated or the mic is too close to the speakers.

>> Let me step back here.

>> Maybe we -- okay. Are we good now?

>> Yes, that sounds better now.

>> Okay. There we go. Is this the -- trying to see this. Okay. First of all, I'm from the old

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school. Given honor to mayor Adler, mayor pro tem harper-madison to councilmembers and distinguished guests, greetings and good afternoon to everyone. For those of you that I have not yet had the privilege to meet, I am lieutenant Davis. I'm the supervisor of the north bureau district representatives, which is mainly parts of central and north Austin. I just want to say that I'm wonderfully delighted and deeply honored to have the opportunity to speak about our community engagement program. What my goal is, four things. One, I want to give an overview of the community engagement program. Number 2, I want to she howment the drs and district representatives, how they can be useful to you and our community. I'm going to talk briefly about our staffing and then I want to show you how to find your district representatives. I'm just going to jump -- is the screen changing?

[3:19:51 PM]

All right.

>> We're still on the first slide.

>> There you go. I'll just jump right in. While Dr's, district representatives are law enforcement officers, we are engaged in the public safety mission and -- but, it's important to know that they're tasked with a myriad of other responsibilities. But the fundamental thing that you need to know is that we solve problems at the neighborhood level. We do that by attending community meetings, form stakeholder groups and homeowner association meetings. We do the neighborhood watch meetings and town hall meetings. What would be most familiar to you is what -- how we handle cafs. Citizen assistant forms or have the grievance and says there's a criminal act or nature or long

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systemic problem in my community and I need to know what you and your police department are doing about it. That information through process will make its way to the district representatives and then we recognize you need to provide in a timely manner a reasonable and prudent response. Most of the times we're either already working on that issue and we have some degree of expertise of what's going on and we try to get that information back to you in a timely fashion so you can respond to those constituents. Excuse me. A great example. This is one of the things I'm excited about. The direction our program is going. I certainly invite you guys to be participants. We had the opportunity -- we put things in buckets, crime panics, crime spikes and bona fide long-term crime issues. So what we did is like, I'm just using the example this actually happened maybe a year ago. Former councilmember Flanagan's

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office, we had an incident, a huge crime panic and his office was inundated with calls. We were able to partner with him. What we did is simply agreed we needed to have a town hall meeting. We had a town hall meeting where we facilitated that meeting. We were able to -- I heard councilmember Harper say earlier that misinformation gets out there. We all know misinformation breeds fear. What we were able to do is distinguish that this was simply a crime pan irk, isolated incident. No further crime to the public. What we were able to do is update the public on -- apprise them of the efforts being made and let them know what they can expect in the very near future. Just to go for our -- the district representative program, it was created in 1998. And so it was built -- the purpose of it was to build positive relationships through

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engagement and that would also, in turn, enhance our community police admission. I want to focus on and highlight those three things. Those would encompass the fullness of what I call community policing. The building the positive relationships. Hang on. The building positive relationship part, positive relationship is not a single event. It requires doing the right thing consistently over time. What that does is that builds public trust and public confidence. We recognize we don't police in a microcosm and any single action could, in turn, fracture, severely fracture that public trust and public confidence. So it's important that we understand our community. That's important -- by its very nature, we're in a intimate relationship with communities. We're in their homes, in their lives and particularly we're in their homes and their lives at

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vulnerable times. Excuse me. When it's vulnerable. When they are vulnerable. So it's important that we move toward building those positive relationships by doing the right thing consistently over time through engagement. When I talk about engagement, what I'm really talking about is having meaningful, rewarding and engaging dialogue. I recently talked to Dr. Brady who authored our matrix report. They were supposed to identify deficiencies. When he did that, I asked him, I said what is the next step in community? Policing. He said -- that's the direction we were going. We have to have meaningful, rewarding, engaging dialogue so that we can understand what people are asking, what they want. We found out that people want to be heard. They want to be validated. And they want us to do something. That something that we do has to

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be the right thing consistently over time. So it's drs or district representatives, it's up to us to find out where people are in that paradigm and then we need to be able to meet them there. Now, when I talk about community policing, that portion of it, it's important to understand a couple of things. Community policing is not the unit. People say, hey, that's the community policing unit. I want to stress that community policing is -- should be woven through the fabric of the organization and not housed in a unit. I say that to say, when you speak to a community policing or district representative officer, they do, in fact, have a unique skill set. We work so closely with so many other entities and agencies that we develop a unique -- we're learning other measures of law. When you talk to a district representative and we're talking about bringing solutions at the neighborhood level, we have to be -- have infused in us, covid

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enforcement, traps department, public works department, the fire department and we need to know a host of other resources for people, whether talking about public health resources, whether we're talking about echo. We need to be able to go in and bring the resources forward. Excuse me. So this is kind of -- just an overview of kind of how our philosophy moves toward building those trusting relationships. So I just wanted to share with you what community policing means to the Austin police department. It's building positive relationships one contact at a time by being present, engaged and visible in our community that we want to address crime and I also say fear of crime. We want to improve the well-being of Austin residents and visitors. The reason I say fear of crime, it's important to know that vulnerable communities, particularly of elderly communities, if they have the fear of crime, it's impacting their quality of life. They go through the same

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emotional spectrum as if they actually experienced that crime. So it's important that we're addressing, that we're -- while in these communities, that we're giving them a customized experience with the Austin police department. Now, when you're talking about community policing, there are some challenges. I just love this conversation because I love to eat, breathe -- eat, sleep and breathe community engagement. Some of the challenges are the variations and definitions of what community policing is. So whether you ask a practitioner, an educator, a philosopher, social justice activist, boots on the ground, academics or executives or even community members themselves, you're going to get a variation of definitions of what community policing is. Now, the constant is no matter how many definitions you give, the one thing is for certain, people know it when they see it. The philosophers tend to say community policing is a philosophy.

[3:27:57 PM]

The Austin police department takes it to the next step and says it's not only a philosophy, it's a practice. I want to just give -- I know we have some time constraints. The UK college of policing definition is the process of enabling citizens in communities to participate in policing at their chosen levels. So when I said we have to find where they are and meet them, that's what we're talking about. That's known as community engagement. This ranges from providing information, assurance to empowering them to identify and implement solutions to local problems and influence strategic priorities and decisions. So I'm going to move on and talk a little bit about our staffing. I hope y'all found some value in that. Before I move on, I strongly want to encourage you and invite you to reach out to our offices and community engagement. We would love to partner with

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you and it's beneficial to touch bases to see what you're hearing, see if we're hearing the same thing to offer a better product to our city. Before reallocation, if you follow along, there were five sergeants and 37 officers. They were spread across roughly four regions and the downtown area. The advantages of that is we just had abundance of officers to attend community events. Again, I have to stress that attending -- community policing isn't at the event itself. I know we're stressed on time, but I just want to share a quick story to help bring that together. Many years ago I had a rookie officer attend an event that I was at. I also had one of my buddies, he's a social activist. They were both there. During that event that we were attending, I handed out, I don't know a sticker or balloon to a kid. The officer said hey, that's great.

[3:29:57 PM]

Let's order more stickers to do community policing. And my buddy, the activist said, hey, that's terrible. That's manipulative. Both of them missed all of the work that led to that point. I said, community policing, it's a -- it's hard to describe. It's easy to miss. But people know it when they see it. The discount of all the intense community collaboration and meetings -- and that was the day I came up -- the veracity of our -- must be predicated on a fierce belief that safe, vibrant, healthy and thriving communities are not accidental. That is the work of multiagency. Collaborative, collective effort. We should have a partnership focused on a unified vision of a sustainable acceptable quality of life. That came out of that. Again, before reallocation, we had -- five sergeants and 37

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officers, post reallocations, we moved towards three sergeants, 18 officers and supplemented them with what we call neighborhood liaisons. I just want to talk about neighborhood liaisons. One of the things we wanted to do, particularly district representative, is say how can we impact not only police sub culture but community culture and have our hands in what policing is going to look like in the community. Well, the neighborhood liaisons are folks who are signed up to go to the police academy, they're assigned to our office immersing them in community engagement programming before participating in the academy. So when they're trained, they will be the future. Then the officers that were -- district representatives, we put some of those back on the streets so that that culture -- those resources can also benefit the patrol officers.

[3:31:57 PM]

So we're moving toward retraining all of our district representatives so that we can have a uniform response. There's no cookie cutter. Because different communities have different concerns and issues that need to be resolved. Now, the screen up here, the elements of community engagement, I'm not going to go through all of those. But I just needed to highlight a couple of parts about that. When we're talking about communities. So one of the -- an officer saw that and said that's a no brainer. Of course, you have to identify the community. What's missing is communities are not just geographic locations. People can belong to more than one community. There can be communities within communities. I'll use myself for example. I'm part of the law enforcement community. But I also live in east Austin. I'm part of the east Austin community. Well, it turns out, I'm an African American. I'm part of that community. I worship in east Austin.

[3:32:57 PM]

I'm part of that community. I'm a member of the neighborhood association and many of those groups in my community. So turns out my district representative is officer Perry. When he shows up, I expect him to wear the right hat, wear a bunch of hats and address the community that he's speaking to. That one that says identify community or community -- it's not so simple. There was a little thought with it. Again, we want to work with the community. We want our approaches to be community-led and us to be a link in the chain and not the lead. We have to find one of the by products of that and -- when we're not -- when we're in a link of the chain and not the lead, can when crisis happens, we have a built-in crisis management team and we have accountability and expectations and through relationship doing the right thing consistently over time. We've built something that we can move the needle forward. The other one I want to comment on, we say empower police officers to make decisions and

[3:33:57 PM]

act. That's what I'm talking about the harm index. We're not giving officers the go, giving them all power. I'm talking about discretion. So that you're not -- in a nutshell, you're invoking the will of the people. So that's an important part. The final. The strategy that we use is called harm focus police. It's the height -- harm focused and -- before every operation or initiative, we have to ask ourselves, what harm could be done and how can we avoid that harm? So the intelligence-led part of it and that's going beyond the data. We want to include the human element. That's important because data does not always reflect community sentiment. We have to be able to speak the language of the community and invite the human element in there.

[3:34:58 PM]

Then we have to be problem oriented. We need to make sure we're addressing the underlying issues surrounding those problems. Last story is I attended a community policing or engagement. You guys have probably saw it. There's a viral video of a woman calling 911 because guys are playing basketball in the streets. You know what the officer does, he shoots hoops. Everybody called that community policing. I beg to differ. I think that's being what everybody should be. That's being respectful. That was not the underlying issue. The underlying issues was not that the kids were playing the basketball in the street. The underlying issue is the kids didn't have a safe place to play basketball. So that's how we train drs to be problem oriented driven and to make sure we're addressing underlying -- identifying and addressing underlying issues. The last one is using evidence-based practices. We have to go back to use data

[3:35:59 PM]

and research. What we want to do is find out what worked, what didn't work and what's promising. Make sure we're using best practices. Now, I know what you're saying. You're saying, lieutenant Davis, you have said all these wonderful and promising things so how do I find my district rep and I'm here to say I'm glad you asked. The atlas 1 app is a national public safety tool. Let me see if I -- I'm going to go here. I'm going forward and then back. There is the qr code. We have a qr code. There's the app. The qr code, even if you do it right now, put your phones up. It should take you to the app. It will take you to a - - excuse me. The app will open up and have a lot of public safety, particularly the community engagement portion that will lead you to your -- finding your district representative. If I can pause, I'm going to turn it over to another officer to explain that to you real quick. Shouldn't take more than a few

[3:37:00 PM]

seconds.

>> Thank you, lieutenant Davis. Councilmembers and mayor pro tem, everybody, welcome and thank you for this opportunity. I just really quick want to focus on the finding your district representative. We currently updated the website so it's easier to find us. So when you now go to the city main web page which I have shown there and you click on the district representatives, you'll hit that screen which explains who we are, what we do, what lieutenant Davis explained. Right in the middle, big bold words, find my district representative. If you click on that, it takes you to a link which now has a map of the city of Austin. And it has all 18 of us on there with what region we're assigned to. You actually have a picture and it tells you where you're assigned. You know who your Dr looks like and where they're assigned. Let's say you don't know what area. We've made it more user friendly. You can hit find my Dr and you can enter your address.

[3:38:01 PM]

Once you enter your address, it will tell you exactly what Dr is for that area. There's really two ways to find us. As lieutenant Davis mentioned, we have the new app. The atlas 1 app. It's a great app. I've been messing around with it and playing with it. I really have found it very useful. What I did for purposes of this presentation was went ahead and put up the qr code as lieutenant Davis said, you can actually take your phones right now an scan that qr code and it take you to the app and create an account, which is completely anonymous. You can start finding a lot of data. This app replaced the old APD app that we had. I believe it's a lot more user friendly. For example, you go to the about ap page and you can make contact with the administration. You can look at policy. News releases. Chief's monthly report. We even have an incident report database where you can find a report. So if you are a victim of a crime and you don't know where

[3:39:03 PM]

the status of your report is, that page allows you to do that. It also allows you to contact report sales, central records. I think a really cool feature is it gives you access to Twitter, Facebook, all of our social media. So even if you don't subscribe or have those accounts personally, you can still follow Austin police department on the platforms through this app. We also have a recruiting portion of the app, which links you to everything you need for the information about becoming an police officer. We have the whole community engagement section. To me, that's a really good section because there's a lot of programs on there, like the community bike program, which most people don't know about. A way to actually enter your bike's serial number into a database. If it were stolen, we have a way to find the bicycle and find it through a pawnshop by giving it to our pawn unit.

[3:40:03 PM]

Most people don't know about that. We have a find your district representative on there. You click on that and it gives you the same map on the page I showed you. You can enter your address and find and connect and email or call your district representative. You also can find -- ride-along programs, the APD safe place program, which is outstanding. All of our different things are all located in one area under the community engagement tab along with APD substations, contact us. City and state resources. We've got all kinds of things that we have there that people can't -- under the facts and questions, you can find out that you don't know how to get a crash report. We get a lot of phone calls, how do I get a crash report? This app is a way to find that as he will with. They can also get sex offender information. They can get all kinds of things on here. Noise complaint information. How to file a noise complaint downtown at the municipal court.

[3:41:07 PM]

They can get ahold of the financial crimes unit.

>> Thank you.

>> Go ahead and hold you up right there. I appreciate your enthusiasm. I appreciate the presentation by you and lieutenant Davis. I do want to give the committee a few minutes to ask questions. Thank you, guys.

>> Thank you.

>> Harper-madison: I appreciate that, chief Chacon. Thank you both for the presentation. It was good and enthusiastic. I didn't have the heart to pull it. I was going to keep listening. I'd like to offer my colleagues an opportunity to ask some questions. Anybody have any questions for our guests? Councilmember alter and then councilmember --

>> So I just wanted to say that my office is really very beneficial relationship with our district representatives and

[3:42:09 PM]

baker and --

[inaudible] Really big fans of the district representative program. I had a question about -- I wanted to first of all, make sure that the find your district representative was updated with respect to changes that have been made.

>> Yes.

>> It's fully up to date.

>> Okay. Then what happens -- this may be a question, I'm not sure who this is a question for or if this is the appropriate forum. So let's say we move forward with the -- academy. The liaisons are currently scheduled to start in that academy. Who is going to -- the roles filling the roles of other officers.

>> So -- excuse me. Councilmember alter, I'll go ahead and take your question. I appreciate it. That's a good question. I think that we do need to look at that to determine if we have

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the ability to backfill those positions. Those are civilian positions. We have a little bit more flexibility with those. But I know that you recognize the value of getting those folks into our cadet academy. They're going to have that background from having been and performing the role of the district representative. And they're coming in with an even better idea of a service, orientation that we really

want from our officers. But I think we need to look and see how we're going to -- I don't have that answer right now.

>> So appreciate your honesty in that. You know, when I talked with you before, appointed, the district - before you were appointed, the district representative program was one of those I expressed a desire to

[inaudible] And to put back to

[3:44:14 PM]

[inaudible] Et cetera. This may not be the time to that have that full discussion. I appreciated your commitment at that point to the program. I would just ask that you do everything you can to

[inaudible] Keeping this program intact and to the extent that those additional resources need to be found to be put back into it, it really is invaluable in our experience, both for the actual and perceived safety in our communities and my district has been fortunate to have district representatives who have been operating in those areas, sometimes more than a decade. You cannot easily replace that experience. So I hope that we move through this process that you will commit to prioritizing this area

[3:45:15 PM]

for investment.

>> I appreciate that. You know, I've heard from council. I've heard from community members and from our own officers and that all see the great value in the Dr program. So we are certainly looking at how we have to make those priorities and are taking that into account.

>> Thank you. Colleagues any other questions.

>> Councilmember toe voe and councilmember --

>> Thank you. Thanks to councilmember alter. I have far fewer questions than I did in the beginning. Mine were some of the same. I'll just underscore how valuable my office has found our relationship with our district representatives through the years. They are tremendously helpful. In all the way us suggested, lieutenant Davis. I want to thank you for that presentation. It puts that work in a fuller context. That's extremely helpful. I regard it as a high priority to also make sure they're

[3:46:15 PM]

well-staffed. I like the arrangement of having individuals who are in queue for the police academy serve in that capacity. That seems to be really beneficial. I would think that's been beneficial not just for them but also for the police department. I'd be interested in understanding whether that's a -- you would want to continue. Even if the staffing allowed for -- even if the staffing hadn't necessitated that. Is there a value to that terms of the model? I also -- one thing I've never really fully understood, whether district representatives -- whether you've -- whether the police department contemplated having district representatives cycle out of that role for a period of time and be patrol officers and cycle back. And that have that experience in different arenas on a regularized basis. If that makes sense. I guess that's a question for you, lieutenant Davis.

[3:47:17 PM]

>> Councilmember, if I can, I'll answer the first part of the question. I'll go to lieutenant Davis for the second part. I think what we're doing right now is in -- as we're looking at how we are changing the curriculum and doing the curriculum review to see how that -- what they've gained from having done that effort for a little while, there's also the community engagement piece that we're installing at the beginning potentially that is going to be very heavily focused on this type of work for all of our cadets. And so I think there's going to be some areas that we can look at doing that in the future. That's going to be part of the review process as we go through this reimagine class. Lieutenant Daves can answer the second question.

>> Thank you,

[3:48:27 PM]

chief. >>.

>> Your concerns and ideas, I think that this will be a valuable teaching opportunity for us. To actually impact police sub culture. That's just my personal opinion. I think with one of the things we've done with the neighborhood liaisons is not only are you just going through the training, we've met with them and said while you're going through the academy, we need you to give us feedback and keep your pulse of what you're hearing, is what you're teaching consistent with what you're being taught. If we've made an error, come back to us and get clarification or context to how -- what was said to you or what you believe and let us know. A training officer gave -- who you just heard from, created a 40-hour cp 1 community policing training curriculum for those officers, the neighborhood

[3:49:31 PM]

liaisons completed. We hope to keep in play for folks to conserve seats for folks interested in the police department. If you complete this neighborhood liaison training, maybe that will give favor. I'm at the implementation level. So I don't participate that high up. Those are just some of the ideas that we float around why for our experience of -- from our experience of dealing with the liaisons. How things may change in the academy. To be quite frank, we have open, meaningful and as truthful dialogue and we express the stakes are high and the importance of them understanding what we're trying to teach. Is that they care at this with them. Be the person that we're training and carry these values with you while you start the academy and through your career and then we will be a support system for you.

[3:50:36 PM]

It takes a great degree of skill set. We have a lot of knowledge and skill-based. So when you started Dr, a lot of officers find out really quickly how stressful and how -- you're drinking from a -- you're drinking from a water hose of how much information is coming at you and how quickly you've got to be on top of it in terms of learning what the resources are, where they locate and developing context. You mentioned you have drs that have been drs for ten years. They have a wealth of knowledge and contacts within other agencies.

>> I have a -- I have relationships all over Austin from being a Dr 17 years ago. All those relationships, folks still call me. When something happens, they say what do you think about this or

[3:51:36 PM]

your stance about this. They're not just work relationships. They're true relationships that we work to build. I hope I answered your question.

>> You did. Thank you.

>> Please, all of you, utilize our office. When we get things that -- cabs that come, we want to invite you to some of those community meetings. I implore you, make sure you understand that we don't get in the politics of anything. We're there for the community to bring calm and show that we're a unit. A city unit and organization. So -- we try to have, as best we can to have you prepared. I'm sure you're prepared as you can be. We need to see you succeed. It makes it easier for us. I want to make sure I implore you to reach out to us.

>> Thank you very much,

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lieutenant.

>> Thank you, lieutenant Davis. Councilmember?

>> I don't have a lot to add. My apologies to my colleagues for being late to this meeting. I had another meeting I had to be at. I'll just say this about the district representatives. I want to echo what my colleagues have said. That that is a program that is well-respected in the communities that I represent. There's a strong interest in seeing them continue. I just want to give a shout out to a couple of the folks that -- in district 5 have worked with. Just been very pleased with the relationships. That's officer Philip Kelly and binder and Lucy.

[Overlapping talking].

>> Of course, officer Rosie Perez. She's been fabulous working with us across boundaries.

[3:53:38 PM]

So just wanted to add my -- add my words from district 5 about the importance of this program.

>> Thank you councilmember. Colleagues, any other questions?

>> I think my questions at this point are for chief Chacon. That's just -- I think as much as people really wanted to hear, you know, this kind of robust presentation about what the district rep program is and why, what the rationale is, what the mission is. I really appreciate lieutenant's description. You know, it sounds exactly like I think what people envision. Like you said, it's difficult to describe. You know it when you see it. I think in addition to that, though, folks have questions. As we are going through this process and clearing up misconceptions and confusion, I think it's really important to

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sort of start with how we got here and what it is we intend to do moving forward. I appreciate my colleagues' question about what this looks like adjacent to our cadet process. You probably saw that the crow report came back today also. There's a lot for us to consume. In that, I want to make certain that we're all moving in the appropriate direction. Meaning that we did take the opportunity when we could to really bring our constituents along. One of the things that I really looked to him to establish is just a little more clarity around people's thought for a while we were disbanding the Dr program. I think this presentation and some of what you said in your time and roles so far has proven that to be -- an accurate

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assumption and that's not the case. I did hear that we are reducing staffing. That's going -- I think that's probably going to be departmentwide, especially as we are taking the opportunity to allocate resources in ways that make -- we keep talking about quality of life that make our officers' quality of life better. Professional quality of life better. They're getting to focus on these things they should be focusing on and not so much other things. What I don't think they understand and honestly, I don't know that I ever fully understood, why that was one of the first areas that we pulled resources from. Long before there were any effects from our budget considerations around police budget, we were pulling drs. I never understood that rationale. I think it would be helpful to sort of understand.

[3:56:42 PM]

>> Thank you, mayor pro tem. Budget -- didn't impact that decision. It was specifically the reallocation that we were forced to make because of the staffing shortages that we had on patrol and then we had a stop of our academy classes and then loss of a number of positions. We had to look at all of our positions. At that time under chief manly, we all had input into that. Ultimately, the decision was made around units that we would reallocate. I can tell you, we continue to be very thoughtful in that process and I heard, as I said, loud and clear, that the community, our own department, the officers truly value what the drs do. You know, they're a part of that

[3:57:44 PM]

plan. We have to make a determination of where ultimately if we have to make further reductions at what point is that going to be and in what priority is that going to happen. Just through the Tina Triggs that we have on our -- continue attrition on our department, I have a commitment to making sure that we are putting the right staffing in patrol right now. That has got to happen because that's just a public safety need to make sure that we're maintaining our response times to the high priority calls involving violence and domestic violence, gun violence. And that we have enough officers out there to adequately respond and so that we're keeping the public safe and I'm also keeping the officers safe and we have enough to do that. So we are discussing that right now. Those are ongoing discussion that is command and executive staff continue to have in

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coordination with the city manager's office on when those will happen. I just want to be very clear, however, that we've already had a reduction of our district representatives. To me they are a high priority right now for our department and our community. Although they will reside somewhere in that plan, I'm very conscious of the fact that I knew that they're very important to folks.

>> I appreciate that. I don't think it quite got to what it is I was hoping to establish. But maybe I'll figure out a better way to articulate that and reframe the question. I think what I'm attempting to answer is, when people ask why it -- it felt very much to our community Lieb that was the first resource to be -- like that was the first resource to be pulled. Just trying to figure that out is what I'm getting at. I'll reframe my question and pose it to you directly.

[3:59:46 PM]

Maybe I'll get a clearer picture of the rationale for that being one of the first resources to be pulled. Mayor --

[inaudible]

>> Relative to what you just said chief, I want to make sure that as you make sure that you can platoon and staff in a way that keeps the city safe and keeps our officers safe, but if you need something else in order to be able to make that happen, make sure that you come back to us. In the work that we did during the budget last year, we left open in a couple different places that invitation for you to come back. There are a couple of different topic areas. So please make sure that you do. You know, there may be additional options that you have

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relative to working with the option that is are most immediately in front of you. That was also covered in the work that we did last budget session. So make sure that you involve us to whatever degree is necessary for you to be able to drive those safety issues.

>> Thank you. I appreciate it. Colleagues any other questions? We have one more briefing this afternoon.

>> Thank you very much. Thank you for bringing that information for us. You're muted again.

>> Thank you for -- if I made a mistake, it was a mistake to my mind and not my heart. You have all been gracious. I thank you all for the

[4:01:46 PM]

opportunity.

>> Thank you for your time. You did great. It was flawless. All right.

>> My hope is generally to be able to extract are we doing things right. Is there some support that council could offer to make sure we're getting the most well-trained diverse public safety. I see -- chief Davis. All right. It looks like we're ready to get started. AFD, over to you.

>> Yes, ma'am. Thank you, mayor pro tem. Harper Madison. And the rest of the public

[4:02:47 PM]

safety committee for allowing us to present. Also, we would like to thank chief baker for support for the fire department's diversity initiative. I'm Richard Davis, assistant chief, fire chief of the recruiting section. I also have lieutenant Aaron Nunez here to give the community diversity presentation. Lieutenant Nunez is responsible for operating the day-to-day recruiting operation. We have 2,064 applications confirmed for the position of fire cadet. As it stands now, our pool is currently 71% diverse. This is an outstanding percentage. Hopefully this translates into a successful applicant. Lieutenant Nunez will be up next to present to the committee on the fire recruiting diversity initiative. Once again, thank you, we appreciate your time.

>> Chief Davis -- while I can

[4:03:49 PM]

appreciate the time and effort that went into preparing this presentation, we're a little over time. But this is an important presentation for us. Wanting to make sure we keep it as concise as possible, gentlemen.

>> Yes, ma'am.

>> Good afternoon. I'm lieutenant Nunez with Austin fire department. Want to go ahead and thank you all for allowing us to give you this presentation on where we stand right now in our recruiting efforts. Before I begin I want to thank chief baker. I don't know that there's been another lieutenant in charge of recruiting that has had the support from the executive level that chief baker has given us and of course, chief Davis and -- for helping us with that leadership as well. I'm going to go down --

[4:04:50 PM]

diversity is really important to us in Austin fire department, both in temps of the service we give to the -- terms of the service that we give to the community and the reflectivity of firefighters within Austin. We've been working really hard this past recruiting cycle to increase the diversity in AFD and I think you'll see that it's really paid off what we've done. The covid-19 has been difficult on us all. That's been

the case for us as well. We've not been able to do the in-person events that we're usually doing. Usually when we recruit, we're recruiting face to face in front of folks at community events, at schools, talking to folks and we've not been able to do those sorts of things. We've been shifting over to a

[4:05:52 PM]

more digital centric work and that's really kind of paid off for us. We've done well with that. Real quick before we get into the numbers, I want to --

[inaudible] Talk about target and nontarget a lot during this presentation. A target candidate is someone who is in that minority group who identifies as those in one of our candidate --

[inaudible] Other folks who have not identified as such aren't going to be deemed target

[inaudible] In 2021 hiring process, we had 25% of our cics target. It's pretty remarkable in comparisons to other hiring processes that we've had before. It's a 13-point increase or a

[4:06:52 PM]

33% increase year over year. Number of women in our recruiting cics are 15.4%. I'm sorry. 14.4% of the total makeup of our candidate interest cards. These cards are something someone fills out when they're interested in Austin fire department and having these cards, it just starts the first step of the -- process.

>> Lieutenant, I'm -- catching up with the presentation. We're on slide 4 or 5. If you could go forward in the slides, please.

>> Let them know when you need to go to the next slide.

>> Thank you.

>> Sorry about that.

>> Let's go forward one more slide, please.

[4:07:55 PM]

The next. All right. Our candidate interest card pool, we've got 15.4% of candidate interest card pool is African American. That's a 10% increase over the hiring process 2019. Next slide, please. Our hispanic group is 44% of our cics. This was by far the largest demographic group and a 21% increase over hiring process. Let's go to the next slide please. One of the things that I didn't mention for the last slides was talking about the demographics

[4:08:55 PM]

was the educational background of all the different candidates. The education background on the candidates is all of them have a high degree of education. They're college graduates or demographic makeup so --

[inaudible] As far as the applications to date right now, like chief Davis was saying, 71% of the candidates that we've had submit applications so far in that target pool. We're looking -- right now, we've got, our African American group has 14.6% diversity. These numbers are a little bit different than what are on your screen. That's because they're updated as of this afternoon.

[4:09:57 PM]

So we've got 14.6 African American diversity in our current slides. 42.6 hispanic, all these are at or at the top of our historical numbers. We've never had a number this high for hispanics. This is the second highest percentage we've had for African Americans. Same is true for women. All in all, this is a really diverse crowd of candidates. We've not been able -- we've not had numbers like this before. Next slide, please. So on the top slide, you'll see our total numbers in comparison to hiring process over the last ten years.

[4:10:58 PM]

While the number of the '21 class seems a little small, it's because it's halfway through the process. It's numbers based upon last Thursday's. If you look at the percentage of all these classes, we're out-performing them in terms of percentage. I think that's important because that's the pool of candidates from which we'll end up hiring. It doesn't matter if we had a whole bunch more candidates and in one particular class or hiring process if we didn't have that reflectivity out in the candidates at the end. Historically, these are really good numbers for the fire department. In fact, in most cases these are numbers that we've not been able to reach before.

[4:11:58 PM]

I'll answer any questions that y'all have about --

[inaudible]

>> Thank you very much. I appreciate it. I also appreciate, I see a couple other folks here. Maybe what we could do is consolidate and have all our questions come at the end. Was there any other information that you all wanted to present? If not, I'd like to turn it over to chief nicks for a bit.

>> If you wouldn't mind, I know we had a brief conversation about this. It seemed like some of that information, my colleagues would be interested in. A lot was compelling. If you wouldn't mind sharing and then we'll roll into questions.

>> Absolutely. Hold on just a second. Anyway, while I'm getting this ready. I would like to say that -- I'd like to thank chief baker and the recruiting section. I've looked at the numbers. These are the best numbers since 2013 in recruiting. 2015, '17, '19 not so great.

[4:13:00 PM]

You have to have all things working on all cylinders, the recruiting, hiring process, everything in order to have a good result. I would like to make a couple of recommendations. To help diversity in the cadet class, I would request the following. Recommend the following. We look back to the last three or four hiring process, we study the effect, of -- the psychological disqualification, appeals process has on people of color. I would further recommend that if any of these process show adverse impact or disparate impact, we review the practices that should be undertaken, appropriate changes should be made in these processes. I would hope that afa could be a part of this review. I think it's appropriate to have a group such as the reimagine public safety group be a part of that process, too. My assessment, I believe these background checks and disqualifications for

[4:14:02 PM]

psychological and initial disqualification may be harming people of color. I think we should do the study and let the results of the study inform us and see if we need to make appropriate changes. Changes.

>> Thank you, I appreciate that. If there's nothing else from AFD or afa, I will go ahead and open it up for my colleagues, if you have questions. I can't quite see everybody. Councilmember Casar?

>> Casar: Thank you, councilmember. And -- and I thank you, Mr. Nunez and everybody at reciting for the strong numbers. I really appreciate that work.

[Indiscernible] Can a person at AFD sort of speak in this next step in the process after recruitment, especially as it relates to what we can do under state law as far as sort of fair chance hiring and not really

[4:15:02 PM]

looking really far back into someone's criminal history? How far back are we looking, have we seen any impacts, is that a conversation that we should have as chief nix raise here.

>> I can speak to what the next step is in the process. We're in the process of converting all of our cics into applicants. All of those who expressed interest in the Austin fire department getting them to actually fill out the olympic. Once they become an applicant and move on to the

[indiscernible] What you are referring to right there, they have specific requirements for -- for their -- the legality of -- of what's required by --

[4:16:04 PM]

what we accept as far as criminal background, I think that process is set for this hiring process. Now, if we want to look at that and go forward into the next hiring process, we can open it up and look at that process then. But -- but for this process, that's set.

>> Casar: That makes sense, I know that you are already on track with this process. When would be the appropriate time for us to look at -- some of those disqualifications for the next process.

>> I'm going to let chief Davis take this question.

>> Casar: Sounds good.

>> So currently our disqualifiers for the current process is on the recruiting website and councilmember you had asked how far back do we go back when it comes to some of these qualifiers. Depends on the qualifier itself. Some go back two years, some go back 36 years. There's also someone that goes back five years depending on what the issue at hand is.

[4:17:05 PM]

Because of the certification requirement, when it comes to the emts, becoming an emt emergency medical technician, individuals cannot have any felonies on their records. These are some of the things that we have to contend with as we process individuals through our application process.

>> Casar: That makes sense to me. Chief, the idea would be for us to look at what state law is and we obviously can't do something that -- we wouldn't want to put somebody through a whole process of under state law, they can't get certified. That makes good sense. I guess the question would be where are we doing something above and beyond state law and are any of those things that would potentially need a review because, as we've been talking about so much in the last year, but frankly for years, we know that -- that in communities of color, historic -- historic levels of sometimes overpolicing could

result in -- in us knocking folks out of the process maybe for something that they shouldn't -- we might all look around and say they shouldn't have been

[4:18:06 PM]

knocked out for. I would be really interested, if there are any instances where you have a really good applicant that Mr. Nunez just described to us, I'm wondering if the fire chief can be handled alone or if there's any need for the council to be involved. This is a place we're trying to move forward as a whole community. If there's an

[indiscernible] For the fire department, I think there would be the desire in the community to move forward on that. I don't know assistant chief or Mr. Knicks if either of you all have seen any instances of this that would be worth highlighting or describing so that we know what we are really talking about here.

>> I was going to say I know some examples. I don't want to take too much of everybody's time, I can write some notes into council. There are some examples, we have disqualified people

[4:19:07 PM]

that does not comport with state law. All that I'm suggesting is that it's pretty easy to do the study, you can look at year by year and see the demographics of people that were knocked out for that particular step in the process, see if it's a bigger impact on people of color. If it is, let's see what kind of adjustments we can make to include those people in the process. I would disagree that we need to wait until the next process, because we're making it more lenient, so we are expanding the pool, not contracting it. If we were to take away, let's say, juvenile crimes if they are over seven years old, you know, that's something that we could do in this process, we could do the study and do it in this process, in my opinion. I don't know why we need to wait. We've got a two year process all ready to start. If we could make changes right now to make diversity better, I think we need to be looking at this process.

>> Councilmember Casar, I have made some of the processes a bit more simplified. For example, when I first got here we were looking at

[4:20:08 PM]

credit score, I removed the credit score requirement. I removed the college requirement, 15 college credit hours. When I meet with the team, we do look at some of the things that may have acknowledge impact on the individual, regardless of their demographics. How long ago did they smoke marijuana, if they smoked marijuana in high school, we don't --

>> Thank you, I would be really interested in folks took a look and see what knocked people out recently and for you all to have that conversation as a group or bring it back here, but that -- we have certainly seen that impact in other city departments that -- that's been heavily -- addressed oftentimes and I'm glad you all are working with it.

>> Absolutely. We will be back with the recommendations from the

[indiscernible] Three or four years hiring process as

[4:21:10 PM]

the [indiscernible] Process background and psych test

[indiscernible] On the application pool.

>> Thank you, hopefully I will circle back with us. We all would certainly like to be a part of the process and have that information. Councilmember alter?

>> Alter: Thank you. I was curious what kind of data we have in terms of diversity and getting through the academy. Obviously we have a lot of numbers from -- from the police department and looking at the academy where -- where you may have recruited a diverse class, but then we are seeing disproportionate drop off along the way. I'm not sure who can address that.

>> We have that, I don't have it before me, but I will call maybe lieutenant Jeff Davis or lieutenant Nunez can speak with that, I shared that -- I'm not sure if we made it to your office or not but we do have that

[4:22:12 PM]

data. Lieutenant Nunez do you have that information available that we discussed earlier?

>> Yes, I do have the numbers going back to -- to the hiring process back to 2011. I don't know how far you want to go back, councilmember, but I will give you the most recent class was 2019.

[Background noise]. Okay. 2017. So from classes 123 to 127, as far as individuals hired versus graduation, say the African-Americans numbers were at 5.6%, they graduated 3.6% of that -- of that particular group graduated and then on to -- to the particular firefighters. I will hit some of the highlights. The hispanics we hired 22.7%, we had 21.7% graduate. As far as the -- Asian Americans, we had 1.5% of

[4:23:14 PM]

those hired, and that one also was like roughly about 1%, also graduate --

>> Alter: I'm sorry, did you say that was only from 2017?

>> Yes, ma'am, going back to 2017.

>> Alter: Going back to 2017 or does that mean that you are just giving me the number for 2017 or does that go through 2021.

>> I'm giving you the numbers for 2017. As far as the graduation ratios for the -- for the current classes that we have now, we -- one class hasn't graduated, one class would graduate from the -- from the -- may the 7th. So some of these classes are diverse more so than others. We have lost particular individuals due to academics, some due to physical aspects of the job. So -- a lot of instances, it's -- the -- the academics that -- that get people out of the process basically,

[4:24:15 PM]

the emt or the

[indiscernible] Aspect that knocks them out of the process, knocks them out of the class.

>> What we can do, councilmember, when we circle back with you all, talk about the last four years of hiring, the process, the impact that it had on people of color, we can give you the information. I think we can go back to 2011 --

>> Alter: I was just trying to understand -- I know that I recall at one point on council there was a period where we were having heat stroke and other things and -- and there was also, you know, we just were seeing really stark evidence of issues of making it through the academy that it was not obvious to me that there were not changes that we could make, you know, but I don't -- I would like to understand the extent to which it's a challenge for the fire department and it's hard for me from the data that you are presenting to understand that. So I think first we have to understand the challenges from what we can tell from the data and the more recent the data, the better and then see if there's -- if

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there's some way to address that, whether it's through exit interviews or looking at patterns and I think that's part of what led to our impetus in redoing the police academy, taking that lesson there and asking the question again. I don't have any idea if there's a problem, per se. Other than the data that you just gave me. The last thing that I will throw out that, I can cover it -- it's one thing to recruit, another thing to promote and so I -- I would very much like to hear from chief baker about -- about, you know, how well we are doing on the promotion with respect to -- to diversity. Both for people of color and for women. Chief Knicks and I talked about it, even the emotion association needs to have more in -- more in its

[4:26:17 PM]

leadership, I would like to hear more about your plans for addressing those issues.

>> Absolutely, thanks for those questions. We are not doing very well within the Austin fire department. One of the problems is we had to get them on board early for the hiring process, to have those numbers on board to promote. For example, if I'm not mistaken, we have approximately maybe 11 Latinos, hispanics, battalion chiefs, of those 11 about nine or 10 are eligible to retire within the next 12 months. We have also within the battalion chief I think we have one African-American chief, division chief ranked, we have -- we had no -- no African-American division chief ranked, however, I do have two assistant chief that are African-American and I have one female that is a division chief. In the division chief, one white female. But on the -- on the lieutenant captain level we

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are not doing very well as far as minority promotions because we just don't have enough minorities who are eligible to take the test. They are not eligible to take the test because we don't hire enough minorities to begin with. So hopefully the -- the more minorities we can hire, we can increase our promotional pool. But there are some other things that we may be able to do, by looking at the impact to see how much impact we have. For example, we probably can have a discussion of whether or not as a firefighter did you need to become a fire specialist in order to take the lieutenant test. That may or may not help, there's more deep discussion that I need to have on that, look at the numbers, see what impact it would have had. We change it from going from firefighter to lieutenant. It doesn't necessarily mean that you will get a more diverse pool of lieutenant. You just have more people taking the test, which includes everyone. So that may even make it worse or may have, I don't know, information that I need to just dive into with the union and with the staff and with the city manager office there and everyone

[4:28:19 PM]

else to make sure. But we have room for improvement. I think we are describing -- get there, but I really need to get more minorities hired on the front end and that will increase the opportunity to get the employees to make the rank of lieutenant and captain. I can't make chiefs if I don't have minors as captains and -- minorities as complaints and we don't really have a lot of minorities as captains. I don't have that number before me but I can get that information for sure. Chief, I think he raised his hand.

>> I'll be brief. I think in the hiring process, councilmember alter, you asked for some information a couple of years ago that was a great format, in my opinion, it showed who was apply -- who has applied

for the department, who got into the department within the cone of influence if people actually had a chance to hire, I asked chief Davis to update that and when you see is you see throughout the process caucasians doing a

[4:29:20 PM]

little bit better, people of color doing a little bit worse. That's what gave me this notion that we probably need to look at disqualifiers and psychological disqualifiers and seeing if those are having a disparate impact. Again, we can do a study on that, take a look at statistically and determine that. We should do adverse impact on our promotional process. Chief baker may be right, but my gut tells me very little if no impact on the promotion, but I don't know. The association could pay for that study if we could get a [indiscernible] Psychologist to do it, if the department doesn't have the resources we would be happy to do that. Essentially with bargaining coming next year, we would like to see where the opportunities are, really study statistically see where the opportunities are and make changes. We fully want to be a partner in that if possible.

>> Thanks, thanks

>> Thanks, chief nix.

[4:30:21 PM]

In three or four years of background we should look at the written test and oral exam to see how much the written test and the oral test is having the impact on the minority hiring. There may be something, but may not be none there. While we're looking at the background check, the psych test, we should look at all our testing process to see how that worked.

>> I agree. We need to look at every little incremental step to see what we can do better.

>> Harper-madison: Colleagues, any other questions? So along those lines, chief, I wonder what next steps need to look like here. Does it look like you all get together and rope us back in later. Do we all get together? Do we bring it before the whole council? Chief breaker, what's your suggestion on how we make sure this is another thing that we talk about, but never do anything about.

>> Well, I think since the chief nicks has offered the support, we can sit down and discuss what we need to do to move a step forward.

[4:31:25 PM]

He we may agree or disagree from things. We can come sit down. I appreciate chief nicks even offering it. That's a good starting point for us. I like going back three or four years and the hiring process and the steps in the hiring process and see if we can make improvement. There's always room for improvement and I need to improve myself as fire chief and I think we can move forward. Council, if you can give us -- I was going to say two weeks, but we're in the middle of hiring process right now. If you can give us 30 days if that's not too long to try to give the information to you, I don't want to interrupt the background recruitment team right now. The application end on April 30th and they will have a whole lot of work to do after that to get these in the process and I don't want to take away from them, but I do need the resources them. Another thing in the recruitment process is rebuilding our background team and we're in the process of adding more

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personnel to our recruitment section, but I think it will help out some. So the 30 days, mayor pro tem, if that's appropriate for you, your team?

>> Harper-madison: You know, acmmarina had his hand up and it sounds appropriate to me. I'm have him speak and our colleagues weigh in and we'll look at when is the next public safety meeting because that might be a good opportunity to circle back on this item.

>> Sure. Thank you, mayor pro tem and thank you, assistant city manager Arrellano. I think there might be information that might be best provided to you in written form that perhaps again taking chief baker's suggestion that the next 30 days that by may 31st if I could set that date for the chief to come back with all this information provided to the committee and then at that point you can determine, you know, what would be the best in terms

[4:33:28 PM]

of calendaring for an agenda item at your next -- at the next available public safety meeting.

>> Excellent. I'm not quite sure. I say 30 days. I'm not sure we will have all the information about the appeal process. That may take longer. It may take some outside resource help for that. But we'll do our best but it may take longer to go through the appeal process for that. I know it will take more than 30 days, but we'll get as much information as we can get in -- information we don't have we'll be able to justify why we didn't have it.

>> Harper-madison: I appreciate that very much. Just keeping us in the loop is helpful. If there's anything we can do on our independent to supports those efforts in collecting that data that would be something we're open to as well. So colleagues, if you all don't have any questions, I have one or two and we can let everybody go for the day. Any other questions?

>> I was going to make one last comment, for you to pass on to your colleagues. I want to thank my wildfire division team for the hard work they've been doing to

[4:34:28 PM]

get this hub up. I want to thank lieutenant Nunez and his team for the recruitment effort they've been doing. Thank you.

>> Harper-madison: Thank you, chief baker. I'll echo that. In the considerations around us following up here, one of the things that I want to make sure we do is have somebody from the African-American firefighters association present. I think that might have been one area where we were remiss this afternoon in not having their contribution to the dialogue. And in that it occurred to me should we also include someone from lbgtqia plus association and if there is a separate association for women, a representative from there as well?

>> Yes, we should. I mean, right now we do not have a women's association, per se. A few years ago it broke down and they asked the association to represent them, but chief baker recently reconstituted one recently so that might be good. We also have a lulac organization within the fire department that should be included. I have talked to lulac and

[4:35:29 PM]

the African-American association about these issues, about participating. And I know they want to. So yeah, I think it's good. I think we need to assemble the data and make presentations to all these groups and really spit ball some ideas on how we can make these approvals appropriate where more people of color can get to work.

>> I really appreciate that. The one thing that I always sort of lead these conversations with is feeling like I don't quite know what next steps look like so I will resist the urge to try to control this process because this is not my area of expertise, but I really would like to have some -- I don't know, chief, if I'm asking you from the afa perspective or chief Davis from AFD's perspective, but what specifically can we look forward to in terms of a timeline and look back and check back in? I'd really love to have something tangible.

>> If you can give me a couple of days to put together [indiscernible] After I meet with the

[4:36:31 PM]

groups, lulac, African-American association, the union, and meet with the city manager's office, we can put together a robust agenda before the meeting that you could look at and you can make some adjustments to the agenda. Give me some time to put together a good agenda or proper agenda to speak on. I don't want to just be talking. I want to make sure I have the right steps ahead. And I need time for everyone to make sure that I get input from all parties to put together this step ahead process.

>> I really appreciate that. And that's a consideration that I was hoping for, that the next time we talked that y'all have already had the opportunity to talk to everybody. With that, I think that was the last of my questions. Colleagues, are in there any other questions from you all? Thanks, y'all. It looks like collaboration was the word of the day. So thank you for, Austin fire department, chief, chief Davis, lieutenant Nunez, is he still back there, and then chief nicks, thank you all for your time this afternoon. We really appreciate it. Councilmember tovo, did I

[4:37:32 PM]

see your hand?

>> Tovo: Yeah. I apologize for coming in late with a question. I had to step off the dais for a brief period so I may have missed this information. I wonder if any of you spoke to what impact, if any, the fire academy has on recruitment? I know chief nicks and I have discussed that through the years, that program, and the way in which it could be embedded within the recruitment efforts and I wondered again if you've already answered that I'll go back and watch the tape, but if nobody addressed that [indiscernible].

>> Chief Davis can address it again and talk about the --

>> Tovo: That's all right. If he addressed it I'll go back and listen to the tape unless anybody has an additional comment about it.

>> So the impact on the fire academy, as far as basically recruitment, I think that -- I wouldn't think of the impact as being diversity ingeneral, but I think it's based on the individual not being prepared to go through the fire academy.

[4:38:33 PM]

We take great strides to make sure that each individuals have mentors and are prepared trying to go through the academy. But like I mentioned before, a lot of issues have is to do with physical constraints, getting injured and in some cases academics.

>> Tovo: I apologize. I don't want to interrupt you. I think I wasn't clear on my question. I was really talking about the academy that we had for high school students that the city sponsored high school academy that then shifted to the responsibility of the school district.

>> Are you referring to the Ibj academy?

>> Tovo: I am. I apologize for the lack of clarity.

>> Yes. The Austin fire department doesn't own the Ibj academy. That's strictly with aid. So other than we have some firefighters who work for ace aircraft the Austin fire department doesn't really have an impact as related to that program.

[4:39:33 PM]

>> Tovo: Maybe this is a conversation for another day, but you know, at one point there was -- when it was shifting there were conversations about how to better embed -- even if it's an aid program, to you Howe to really encourage those who are participating in that program to consider careers within the fire department and whether there were policy changes or other kinds of support that could help facilitate that close connection between the individuals who are completing that program at Ibj and our own fire department.

>> Well, we can add it to the agenda items along with the next step process, looking at the -- that academy, the pass the torch academy and the

[indiscernible] Academy. We can look at all the programs with the youth and add it to our next steps process and see if there's any way to enhance those programs as a recruitment tool. We can look into that as part of the next steps process.

>> Councilmember tovo, real

[4:40:33 PM]

quickly, I think I talked to you and some other council members during the last bargaining cycle that the association is committed to an internship program. We'd like to help negotiate that to make sure it's appropriate, but that's a way we could bring in people from the Ibj academy if we did have an internship program. We could use it as one of the qualifiers to give them that step up. That's just very high level talking, but we are committed to working on that and we are committed to it outside the contract. We committed to it without trying to leverage anything for it. We want to work in that regard if that's something the chief and the council would prefer.

>> Tovo: Thanks, chief nicks. I know you and I have had an opportunity to talk about this over the years and at various times and I appreciate you reminding me of that internship possibility. That is of -- I'm real interested in that. Would love to hear more about it or love to support it if it seems like something that has the support of the firefighters and the leadership.

[4:41:38 PM]

>> Harper-madison: That sounds great. And that inspired one last question or two last questions for me. Number one would be is there an active relationship with workforce solutions? I know that they are expanding outside of general conversations about workforce development. I know that they're expanding into really dialing into sort of outside of the box what they otherwise wouldn't be focusing on. I don't know if there's any specific focus on public safety with our workforce solutions folks, but if not I don't see why there isn't. And then the other question I would have, you all may not know this, I tried to be a firefighter and back then I did really well on my written exam. I did really well on my bpad, but where I knew I would really struggle is with the cpad. So I was able to take what they called firepower, it was a kinesiology program and really being able to --

[4:42:42 PM]

it was upper body strength in a lot of ways. Some things that some people were not going to be able to do. So one, if there's a formal process for helping cadets really develop the skills necessary to pass that physical part of the test and whether or not there's a formal sort of training opportunity, mentorship opportunity, tutoring opportunity for the -- for the written part of the exam process. And just to be clear, I'm thinking along the same lines as like an internship, but this is more -- I'm thinking in my mind geared towards people outside of high school who already graduated high school.

>> The Austin fire department, we do not offer a formal tutoring process for the written or oral exam, however, for the candidate physical ability test, the cat, we do have a mentor program. I think it's -- I've forgot how long it is. But studies have shown if you participate in the

[4:43:42 PM]

mentoring program for the cat, your chances of passing it are very high. But you must participate in the mentoring program to go through the evolution. Because it's not totally about strength, but if you go through the mentoring program cat, it really enhance a person's chance of passing. But you really need to go more than one day of the mentoring program. A person need to take advantage of the full four or six weeks. I forgot how long it is, but a person really need to go everyday to pass cpad. I've seen people who -- college football players who thought they were in such good shape who do not go mentoring for the cat and failed the test. I see people who weigh 100-pound with the gear on go through the mentoring program and pass the test. But we do not have a formal written or oral process.

>> Harper-madison: Well, I think maybe that was -- your comments there might have been the commercial we need. It sounds like maybe we should. I don't know what the --

[4:44:43 PM]

what the barrier is for that. So my hope is that we can evolve that conversation as well and see if that's something that we can have. I mean, in my mind if that's one of our opportunities to get the best possible recruits and make sure they are as prepared as possible, I don't see why we wouldn't make that investment.

>> Okay.

>> Harper-madison: All right.

>> And there are some ways to mentor on the written test and the oral test. Some ideas I've had over the years I'd love to share with council. I know you guys have had a longer meeting than you need, but skills can be brought up over time, do the right training. Anyway, I've got some ideas on that Idaho love to share with y'all and I'm sure that chief baker and I could work on that for council.

>> Harper-madison: I'd love that. We can make sure to give you more time the next time you come to talk to the public safety committee.

>> Yeah, that's going

[indiscernible] I think we can do it.

>> And the association can do things kind of more specialized than the department because they have to do it for everybody.

[4:45:45 PM]

So targeted folks came to the union hall and we could do classes on that we'd be happy to do that sort of thing. That would probably help the recruiting effort. It might be -- it might satisfy certain legal challenges. Something absolutely that we can do and talk about.

>> Harper-madison: Awesome. Thank you. Vice-chair, I think that you joined us again. Did you have any questions before we adjourn? All right, folks. So with that we appreciate all y'all's time. Thank you, Austin fire department, chief baker, lieutenant Nunez, chief -- who else do we have? Chief Davis is here still and chief nicks. So at 4:46 we're going to adjourn this meeting of the public safety committee. Thank you, everybody. All my colleagues.