




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager 

DATE: January 19, 2024

SUBJECT: **APD: Providing Additional Resources**

As Interim City Manager, my goal is to help poise all City Departments for success. In fact, as I shared with you in the Year In Review memo on Monday, January 8, one of my three primary objectives when I joined the City was to bring stability to the City as a whole through leadership assessment and attention to providing operational excellence. I also believe it is essential to act with a sense of urgency in this regard, especially given the selection of a new City Manager on the horizon.

Among the most pressing departmental concerns are those challenges faced by our Austin Police Department (APD), particularly in the areas of staffing overall and a “revamp” if you will of the cadet/academy process to ensure we attract sufficient and qualified applicants.

I do want to recognize the support the City Council has provided APD by authorizing significant investments for staffing and specifically retention bonuses as well as approving additional resources related to cadet classes. The 152nd cadet class, which gets underway next month, currently has 87 enrollees. Additionally, 25 cadets graduated this month and another 43 (estimate) are expected to graduate in April.

While good progress has certainly been made under the leadership of former Police Chief Joseph Chacon and Interim Police Chief Robin Henderson throughout 2023, we are facing at this moment the need for a variety of critical initiatives to be implemented simultaneously.

Given that as a backdrop, it has become clear that additional resources are needed to help better support the Department, our Interim Police Chief and her management team to ensure success.

Important work and progress has been made in the following areas:

- Innovative collaboration to support continued education through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Texas A&M University-Commerce, a member of The Texas A&M University System. The MOU offers qualifying APD employees interested in obtaining a bachelor's degree the opportunity to enroll in the College of Innovation and Design at A&M-Commerce to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with an Emphasis in Law Enforcement Leadership.
- APD completed its staff deployment study to help address staffing needs
- Focus on recruiting and retention efforts
 - Laser focus on filling positions within 9-1-1 with the result of greatly improved staffing
 - Overall, hired 85 new employees since January 2023
 - Training team and on-the-job trainers have conducted more than 25,000 hours of training of new employees
- Unique and successful program implemented to bring in Reserve Officers to help with special events coverage across the City

For 2024, here are the important initiatives underway or soon to be launched where we realize additional executive-level support is needed:

- While the recruiting bonus program is yielding positive results, we also want to consider alternate recruiting strategies, including:
 - Using professional recruiting agencies specializing in police recruiting
 - Investing financial resources for new recruits participating in the Academy
- Furthering partnerships with higher education institutions, to enhance Academy curriculum design and delivery, including:
 - Teach instructors on improved curriculum delivery and instructor capacity
 - Rely on our expert learning community
 - Upgrade delivery of non-tactical curriculum
 - Address related KROLL study findings
- Entering into a partnership with BerryDunn McNeil & Parker, LLC (BerryDunn) focusing on a targeted operational review in the following key areas:
 - Patrol staffing deployment schedule
 - Optimize policing for our community given our current resources, identifying what is best practice for a staffing model
 - Restoring special assignments
 - Leveraging use of Field Technology and Data Integration
 - Essential Calls for Service evaluation for dispatching police personnel
 - Evaluate Public Information Request (PIR) process

- Bridging the pay and benefits as possible for our Police Officers
 - As a result of the ordinance approved in 2023, Officers will receive \$2,500 this month and an additional \$2,500 in October which equates to a 6% pay increase for the average Police Officer.
 - Given approval of the resolution by Council on January 18 to establish certain pay and benefits for APD upon the expiration of the ordinance referenced above, we will be bringing forth an ordinance for your consideration on February 1.
 - We also recognize it is critical that this year, we are able to come back to the table with the Austin Police Association (APA) to negotiate a new contract.

With all of this as a backdrop, I also believe it is essential to have a City Management-level resource identified who is dedicated solely to APD. To that end, I am adding an Interim Assistant City Manager position who will report directly to me.

I am pleased to announce that former Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo, known to many here in the City as well as the community from his tenure as Police Chief for nearly 10 years, will be serving in this position. Acevedo has served as a peace officer at the state and municipal levels for over 35 years. Most recently, Acevedo served as Interim Chief of Police of the Aurora, Colorado Police Department and has also served as Chief of Police in Houston and Miami, Florida.

I sincerely believe that APD deserves to have this focused level of support and I am optimistic with these additional resources to help bolster our APD that we will continue to see success and movement on addressing any challenges.

cc: CMO Executive Team
Department Directors