

MEMORANDUM

April 29, 2021

TO: Community Engagement Audit Steering Committee
FROM: Trevor Womack, Chief of Police, Salem Police Department
SUBJECT: Independent Assessment - Findings and Recommendations

My team and I are happy to now accept the final independent assessment report and thank each of you for your involvement with its development. Your efforts and guidance were integral to completing the report and helping ensure a broad range of community voices were heard and considered. While your initial work as a steering committee is complete, our shared work as a community and department has only just begun.

Together we will move policing in Salem forward in new ways and become a model for 21st Century Policing. Our work will be heavily influenced by the independent assessment findings and recommendations and bolstered by a new policing philosophy that improves community safety while enhancing police-community trust. A key first step will be the creation of a strategic plan for the police department which will incorporate many, if not all, of the assessment's findings and recommendations. This will set clear priorities for our organization and ensure steady, measurable progress toward our new shared vision and goals. Our ability to fully implement some recommendations may be limited, as they require additional resources beyond our control.

Over the coming weeks, we will closely review the independent assessment for full understanding and take steps to prioritize and implement its recommendations in ways that best fit the needs of our community. Separately, we have already started an internal assessment of 10 key areas within the department. All of this will build toward the development of our strategic plan during the second half of this year.

More time is needed to fully address the independent assessment, but as a preview, I am providing initial responses to the 11 identified assessment areas and related recommendations.

Assessment Area Responses

Area 1: Mission and Value Statements (2 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations. Address each through the development of a cohesive departmental strategic plan.*

Area 2: Community-Policing Strategy (6 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations. Each will be used to guide the development of our strategic plan. A supportive staffing study is now being planned.*

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Area 3: Organizational Transformation (10 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations. The Salem Police Department (SPD) has begun an organizational change that supports a culture of community partnership, collaboration, and trust-building.*

Area 4: Data Collections and Analysis Capability (12 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations. This is a foundational change area for SPD as we currently lack the analytical capacity required for effective data-driven decision-making and intelligence-led strategies. An assessment process and plan development are already underway. Improved analytical capacity will benefit departmental efficiencies and effectiveness and increase transparency with partner agencies and the general public. We anticipate increased personnel and technology costs for successful implementation. A computer-aided dispatch system upgrade through the Willamette Valley Communications Center is also already in progress.*

Area 5: Interactions with Individuals Who are Unsheltered or Experiencing Behavioral Health Crises (8 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations, although successful implementation will require a substantial commitment and resources from multiple collaborative stakeholders outside the control of SPD. SPD cannot and should not be the primary response for complex social ills; however, we will remain a fully committed stakeholder in any cross-boundary collaborative efforts. We will continue to dedicate command-level time and resources where necessary and appropriate in support of effective multi-agency strategies and are committed to providing CIT training to all personnel.*

Area 6: Interactions with BIPOC and LGBTQ+ Communities (5 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations. SPD is committed to unbiased, fair policing practices and will be working to operationalize and institutionalize the tenets of Procedural Justice. We will continue to take proactive steps toward increased communication and partnership with all segments of our diverse community. Increasing diversity will be a priority within our departmental strategic plan.*

Area 7: Youth Engagement (7 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations. The SRO program was already eliminated by Salem-Keizer Public Schools. Those officers were immediately reassigned across three priority areas to help address critical staffing shortages: professional standards (formerly internal affairs), patrol/emergency response, and sex crime investigations. This further speaks to workload and staffing*

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challenges limiting our capacity for desired community engagement efforts, which is also called out in this independent assessment. We are already working with partner law enforcement agencies to create a multi-disciplinary team for Child abuse investigations and formalizing other partnerships through the development of memorandums of understanding. Successful implementation of all recommendations will likely require additional personnel.

Area 8: Response to Assemblies and Demonstrations (10 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations. As noted in the assessment report, changes have been made related to incident management and the communication of overall strategy and priorities during protests. Successful implementation of all recommendations will require some level of cost increases specific to training and equipment.*

Area 9: Recruiting, Hiring and Promoting to Promote Diversity (6 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations; however, a dedicated recruiting unit will require additional personnel resources. Increasing diversity will be a priority within our departmental strategic plan. We will continue to assess recruiting, hiring, and promotional processes through a diversity and equity lens.*

Area 10: Use of Force (1 recommendation)

Response: *Concur. We are currently assessing all departmental policies, not just use of force, and will begin a full update process. We will develop a single use of force policy as recommended. SPD has a policy related to the “duty to intervene” and banned “chokeholds” in mid-2020.*

Area 11: Processes to Ensure SPD Personnel’s Accountability (9 recommendations)

Response: *Concur with all recommendations. The elimination of the SRO program allowed us to double the capacity of our Professional Standards Section going from only one sergeant to two. Dedicating a lieutenant to the Section will require additional personnel resources. The Community Police Review Board (CPRB) falls under the City Manager’s purview and members are appointed by City Council. We recently provided new and enhanced use of force data to the CPRB and will be providing similar information publicly on our website in the future. We have a newer, robust administrative investigation data management system.*

Again, thank you for your invaluable service as members of the steering committee. I look forward to our continued communication and partnership long after the conclusion of this initial assessment effort.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Womack', with a horizontal line extending to the left.

CHIEF TREVOR WOMACK

SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

TW:ks

cc: Steve Powers, City Manager