

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Report and Recommendations on the Police Department's Use of Force Policies

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DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

In response to the [Council's Pledge](#), a consulting team from the Office of Independent Review Group will present to Council its findings and recommendations on the [Bellevue Police Department's use of force policies](#).

No Council action is needed. Tonight's presentation is an opportunity for the Council to ask questions of the consultants to gain an understanding of the factors that informed the consultant's conclusions.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Following the tragic death of George Floyd, people across the nation and here locally were moved to evaluate the continued reality of systemic racism. Mayor Robinson, with the support of the Council, pledged to review the Bellevue police use of force policies to identify any potential reforms. The review of the consultant included identifying any policies that might lead to unacceptable use of force. The Council has repeatedly stated its commitment to ensuring that Black people and other people of color feel safe and respected. Just as when Council authorized federal funding for small businesses and emergency financial assistance, the same principle applies that when the most vulnerable are safe, everyone is safe. The following is the text of the pledge.

- I. **Review** police use of force policies.
- II. **Engage** the community by including a diverse range of input, experiences and stories in the review.
- III. **Report** the findings of the review to the community and seek feedback.
- IV. **Reform** police use of force policies.

To engage subject-matter expertise and an independent, third-party assessment, the City conducted a nationwide search and hired the [Office of Independent Review](#) (OIR) Group from Playa del Rey, California. OIR supplemented its team with a former director of policy for the San Francisco Department of Police Accountability and the past president of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives. The OIR team led the policy review throughout this process, conducted the public engagement, distilled hundreds of communications, performed relevant research, and formed recommendations for potential reforms of police use of force. City staff only assisted the OIR team with technical support, logistical support, and local communications.



Beginning in September, the OIR team began to examine the City’s police use of force policy using the team’s expertise, the latest research, trends, and best practices. This effort launched step one of the pledge.

Step two of the pledge was conducted October through December when OIR led public engagement and took feedback via calls with stakeholder groups, online survey responses, open public meetings, telephone calls, and written communications. There was a blend of opportunities for interested stakeholders to contribute opinions and share personal experiences. Given the continued limitations of public gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual platforms were used for all formal engagement in this process. Significant amounts of community responses and opinions prompted multiple reviews of the policy into January.

To support the collection of comments, the City provided a targeted public engagement web portal at EngagingBellevue.com as well as forwarding to OIR any messages that were received at both Council and staff e-mail addresses. Staff also sent out invitations in a broad manner through various media and established networks across the city. In addition, staff connected OIR with organized groups that voiced interests aligned with the pledge.

In February, OIR released its preliminary findings to the public, took further comment, and thereby fulfilled step three of the pledge. Council, the Bellevue Police Management Association, and the Bellevue Police Officers Guild also received copies.

Today, the process now enters the fourth and final step. Based on all the inputs of steps one through three, OIR prepared its final report, which is Attachment A. Again, Council, the Bellevue Police Management Association, and the Bellevue Police Officers Guild received copies. A copy was also released to the public in advance of the agenda packet of this meeting.

Chief Mylett and the City Manager’s Office take the recommendations very seriously and have endorsed the pledge’s commitment to the public and the analysis of an outside reviewer. The Bellevue Police Department is accustomed to having all of its practices and policies periodically scrutinized in order to remain repeatedly accredited. Another examination of its use of force by OIR received full cooperation by Department staff. While OIR was evaluating the use of force policy, the Department was simultaneously undergoing inspection and inquiry to achieve reaccreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), which was awarded March 26, 2021.

In the coming weeks, the Council will have opportunity to determine potential steps in response to the consultant's recommendations.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The consultants recommend modifying and enhancing use of force policies in various ways for the overall safety of both officers and members of the public. Some recommendations focus on building public trust through additional transparency in reporting.

Fiscal Impact

Potentially new fiscal impacts are yet to be determined. Most recommendations that present a cost are already budgetarily achievable within the adopted budget.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A. Final report on police use of force policies by the Office of Independent Review Group

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A