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From: MIDPEN ACLU <midpen.aclu@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2020 1:27 AM
To: Council, City; City Mgr; Jonsen, Robert
Subject: MidPen ACLU Submission on Police Reform (10-26-2020)
Attachments: MidPen ACLU Submission on Police Reform (10-26-2020).pdf

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Hello City Council, Mayor Fine, Vice Mayor DuBois, Manager Shikada and Police Chief Jonsen,

Thank you for the important work that you conduct on behalf of the city of Palo Alto. Please see the attached file from MidPen ACLU regarding police reform, and feel free to reply.

Thank you,

Jason Miles, Chair
Mid-Peninsula ACLU Volunteer Chapter

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City Council, Mayor Fine, Vice Mayor DuBois, City Manager Shikada, and Chief Jonsen,

We applaud the hard work of the ad hoc committees formed under the City's Race and Equity Framework. We appreciate changes already implemented, such as revised language in the Police Policy Manual, especially the significant reduction of the redactions in the online version of the manual. We also appreciate the willingness to consider several different approaches to ongoing efforts to improve policing practices.

The reforms built out below were introduced in our earlier submissions within Items 2 and 3. Since they are currently under discussion, our intention is to highlight these reforms, not to minimize the importance of Items 1–5 from earlier submissions.

Independent Oversight

Palo Alto arguably provides better oversight of police actions than many cities its size. But the process is not exactly transparent, and it seems subject to considerable filtering by city legal staff and police representatives. And little ever seems to happen as a result. Accordingly, we recommend an alternative that was not included: an independent body, such as a police commission, that has binding, or at least advisory, input on writing police department policy, investigating or reviewing complaints against police officers, and input on hiring practices and agreements with police unions. If an investigative staff is infeasible, we recommend the Independent Police Auditor—preferably with expanded scope—report to this body.

To ultimately succeed, efforts to reform policing policy must include two overarching elements: longevity and independence. The police commission that we recommend would cover both.

We recognize and commend the Human Relations Commission's efforts on independent oversight in 2005 but think that in light of significant changes in public sentiment here and throughout the nation, it is time to revisit the issue.

Alternative Responses to Mental Health Crises

We also appreciate the willingness to consider several alternatives to police responding to mental health crises. We recommend a city Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) (similar to the [CAHOOTS program](#) in Eugene and Springfield, OR) and consider piloting with nearby cities. Alternatively, we recommend partnering with the Santa Clara County MCRT to create a more robust program that would be integrated into the 911 system, respond without law enforcement when

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appropriate, ensure timely response to Palo Alto (response time has been reported up to an hour due to traffic), and provide 24/7 mobile services.

Funding a city-level team may feel challenging in the middle of a COVID crisis. However, note that the cost of the CAHOOTS program is a fraction of that of the cities' police departments (~2%) and has been estimated to result in over [\\$15 million](#) annual cost savings. Furthermore, the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recommends](#) shifting the burden of crisis care funding to the person's health insurance plan that, by law or contract, is responsible for covering this care. There are examples of Medicaid-funded crisis programs across the nation.

We would appreciate a meeting with you to discuss our and the community's interest in these items.

Mid-Peninsula ACLU Volunteer Chapter