



City of Vancouver Police Community Advisory Committee

Meeting 6 – June 13, 2024

Aspen Room | Vancouver City Hall

Facilitator – Christine Moses, PhD, EnviroIssues

Presenters

- William Cooley, City of Vancouver
- Eric Holmes, City Manager
- Chief Jeff Mori, Vancouver Police Department

PCAC Members

X	Martha Baumgarten	X	Jean-Pierre “JP” Parent
X	Paul Burgess	X	Cindy Reed
X	Gabriela Ewing	X	Dominick Rose
X	Mark Frazier		Kia Simeon
	Lester Griffin	X	Destiny Trevino
	Josie Hyde	X	Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle
X	James “Jim” Kirkendall	X	Councilor Sarah Fox
X	Sidney Morgan		Councilor Erik Paulsen

Big questions to keep in mind for each meeting

- What outcomes and impacts are most important to the community?
- How can the City report on these outcomes in ways that build accountability and trust?
- How can the City address gaps in staffing, facilities and technology to ensure that Vancouver is a safer place for all community members?
- How can the City of Vancouver ensure that police services are resourced to meet the needs of our growing community?

Agenda

Introductions & Centering Exercise (Christine)

Committee members were asked if anyone wanted to make changes to the Meeting #5 summary.

- No committee members provided suggested edits to the summary.

Moment of Silence and Discussion (Christine, Eric, and Chief Mori)

A moment of silence was held to recognize the [officer-involved shooting that took place on June 8, 2024](#). Chief Mori and Eric provided an overview of what occurred and what the next steps are for investigating the incident (via the Southwest Washington Independent Investigative Response Team). Two officers responded to a call of a man with an aggressive dog that had bitten passers-

by. Upon the officers approaching the man in their vehicles, he allegedly withdrew what officers presumed to be a firearm and one of the officers responded using lethal force, fatally shooting the man. Officers provided life sustaining efforts once the dog had been removed from near its owner as it was still acting aggressively. The man was pronounced dead at the scene.

Proposed Funding Option Discussion (Eric)

Eric provided a recap of the proposed funding option that was presented during the last meeting.

- The recommended approach is a multi-stage approach, beginning with a levy lid lift, the implementation of a sales tax, and an excess bond levy. Once all are implemented, it would cost homeowners around \$28/month (\$345/year)

The committee was then invited to provide questions and comments on the proposed funding option, keeping the following questions in mind:

- What questions are coming up for you?
- How well does the proposed scenario address the following questions?
 - Is it equitable?
 - Does it include what we want?
 - Can we afford it?
 - What are the tradeoff implications with other City services?
 - Will a majority of voters support it?
 - Can we deliver on the promise?
 - Can we sustain it?

Questions and comments from the committee

- Gabriela, Destiny, and Dominick had no additional questions or comments
- Paul: We've discussed at length that community engagement and capacity building is critical. Within that, when we look at the funding, where does that sit within the funding mechanism. Is this funding robust enough to ensure that the community engagement and capacity building will be maintained within that?
 - Eric: There's never robust enough funding for anything. In the first 6 years, there will be capacity to do that, and the City continues to meet with the committee every quarter to go over how the levy is going. This committee's work continues even after funding mechanisms is passed as an accountability mechanism.
 - Sarah: To piggyback off that. When we're done being in crisis, we may be able to address other things. What we want at the end of this crisis is more community policing and connections but every time we do these exercises, we keep talking about the higher priorities based on our current situations. But it seems like we're never going to get out of this crisis so the community engagement piece will be dropped.
- Anne: Will you go after grant opportunities as they arise?
 - Eric: Yes, we'll go after any grants that would be helpful. The COPS Office grants through the DOJ. These grants help fund up to 60% of the salary costs for hiring officers. This supports funding for 3 years per officer. We typically don't pursue

those grants if we don't have money in the forecast to cover the salaries after those 3 years. Vancouver is eligible to apply for 42 positions through that grant.

- Jim: After the first levy, which focuses on front loading personnel hires. If that passes but the second or third funding mechanisms don't succeed, would we face layoffs?
 - Eric: Yes. The sales tax increase is a few election cycles out. I've never worked for a council that doesn't prioritize public safety when resources get scarce. However, if a funding mechanism like a proposed sales tax increase doesn't pass, we can adjust and put it on the ballot again for voters to consider. Every year there's a legislative session where we can advocate to the State for better access to existing revenue tools or to have access to new tools.
- JP: Why are we talking about the levy now?
 - Eric: The way local governments are funded in WA state doesn't keep up with the pace of inflation, let alone population growth. Our VPD call volume has increased and the complexity of calls has increased. The only way to pay for additional capacity in the department is to go to the voters and ask for it. We need to respond to address growth in demand and the types of demand.
- JP: Are we at the end of a levy cycle?
 - Eric: We haven't done a police levy before (at least not in the last 20 years). In 2016, the Council made a major investment into the VPD. Not through a levy, but through a collection of small revenues (utility tax increase, business license surcharge increase, marijuana tax revenues, etc.). All of that funded the addition of 42 officers that were phased in over several years. The last year of hiring related to that investment were in 2020. During the pandemic, we continued to hire but at a slower rate. During that same time, we did a tremendous amount of internal self-examination around use of force and training. As we came out of the pandemic, that period changed the way we police. It changed the nature of the community's demand for policing.
- Martha: Assuming the initial levy passes and is in place for 6 years, how would the failure to pass the excess facilities bond affect layoffs?
 - Eric: That wouldn't affect layoffs as that would be limited in what it could fund (which wouldn't include hiring).
- Sidney: Being on this committee for me personally has been eye-opening and informative. Considering what my position is in the community I'm a part of and how my name's attached to this conversation, it's important to flag the conversation about community building. There's a lot of stigma between my community (the Black community) and police. How do we directly talk to that elephant in the room? How do we have those conversations while we're trying to vote on it and believe in it and who is willing to have those conversations and keep them going? In the scale of hiring of officers, can you guarantee that the other people you hire are just like you [Chief Mori]? You can't. Because that's an unknown, but people will want to know so that they can build that trust. How do we get people to trust that we're going to do it differently here? I believe in this approach, but who is going to be in the room to answer these challenging questions going forward?

- Cindy: What I hear you saying is that it needs to be part of the culture at the VPD, not a task to be checked off. For real change to be implemented and trust to be built, the community needs to see that change in culture. When it comes to cultural competency, where is the VPD?
 - Chief Mori: When I was interviewing with Eric during my recruitment, my commitment to him was that I was going to evolve the VPD. Since my tenure, I have fired officers for ethical, truthfulness, and competency issues, which includes career employees. We're trying to catch problematic people early-on by doing things like demand that we recruit people of character that are reflective of metropolitan areas and engage more 30x30 Initiative to recruit more women officers. I will hold those ethical standards up as high as I can. I have high standards set and I won't back down from that. I communicate my values in a 1-hour required class with officers. I ask all officers to filter their decisions and actions through 3 screens:
 1. Do your best. You have two things you can control, attitude and effort.
 2. Do the right thing at the right time and for the right reasons. Have courage, not just physical, but emotional courage. Need to be honest and need to be able to call out other officers.
 3. When you're in uniform, treat other people like you'd like to be treated.

I will not allow unethical behavior ever. I'm all about meeting before crisis happens. Unfortunately, it's typically me that attends the community engagement activities because officers need to respond to calls.
- Mark: Police must be transparent. Community members need to get involved with people like Chief Mori to understand what their policies, procedures, and training are, so they know what accountability within the VPD looks like or is supposed to look like.
 - Sidney: That's a part of it, but for some experiences that folks have, a discussion about policies and procedures won't satisfy their concerns. How do you get to the human part of that conversation? We need to create those forums and spaces for those human-to-human "heart" conversations. In California, there are organizations that have created spaces for officers and community to have these kinds of dialogues and it's helping people shift their belief systems. Simple and basic is okay and costs less. It does a lot more for the community than we give it credit for and it needs to be sustainable. We should empower community-based organizations to have these conversations with the VPD too.
- Eric: A few months from now, you can sit here as a committee and hold us accountable for following through with what we promise. Something we need to get better at is truly supporting and empowering organizations other than the city to host and own those conversations and co-own them so that the city is a guest instead of the host.

- Anne: We have 71 neighborhood associations. Each one can have an NPO show up at every meeting who leaves their work and comes and sits with the neighbors to talk about community things. The build out of the SW Washington Training Academy, was the most diverse academy in the entire state of Washington, including 5 women. The chief also has the Diversity Advisory Task Force and he continues to bounce work off of them, including having them sit in on interviews for rank advancements. The Chief and other VPD leadership attend and engage with members of the public at community events held by organizations like the AME Zion Church or the Siew community. We want more of that.
 - Chief Mori: All our policies are on the VPD webpage. We regularly report bad apples to the criminal justice center where people can get decertified.
 - Sidney: I'm not saying that there aren't good things happening here. As a personal story – My kids ordered food that didn't come. Eventually, an officer delivered the food because the driver was arrested. The evolution of change piece is important. When we think about the root of policing in this country and how it started, it was to protect property. How do we keep our energy up and keep up the evolution of change so that their work is more community centered and that they continue to center community in their work moving forward?
- Martha: Once someone gets through the background check and gets into the academy, can recruits washout in the academy? Does that happen?
 - Chief Mori: Yes, they can wash out, and that's happened before when it isn't a good fit. Our background process takes 3-5 months and is thorough. We get into their financials, talk with their neighbors, past employers, etc. We don't hire people with shady pasts. Potential recruits must see a doctor, psychologist, and pass a polygraph test before taking them through the academy. They must also go through a Field Training Officer (FTO) program where they work with three veteran officers. They're then on probation for a year. It's much harder firing career-long officers, but I do it when it needs to be done.
 - Eric: These questions need to be asked all along the way 6 months from now, a year from now, etc. We need to keep asking those questions. We need to think about who we're serving and follow through.
- Paul: With the academy and 720 hours of training. Is part of that training defined by the VPD?
 - Chief Mori: We don't have control over what the state teaches, but we use our FTO program to help instill our training and cultural expectations with new officers.

General Takeaways

- Several committee members wanted more information on how the City would incorporate community bridge-building opportunities into the funding strategy. Eric explained that the language in the recommendation does include consideration of funding for community engagement in that way, but that it's also important for the language to be flexible to allow for the VPD to adapt to any changes in community issues/needs that the VPD should address. He also noted that a big part of ensuring that the city is funding the department in the way that the committee envisions is by continuing to participate in the committee and holding the city and VPD to account.

- Multiple committee members expressed interest in improving transparency in the VPD’s accountability mechanisms. The policies are available online. Chief Mori also noted that it’s been important in his tenure that officers are held to a high standard, noting that he has participated in firing officers who were not up to the standards he requires of officers, including career officers. He also explained the hiring and training processes that aim to hire officers that share the same commitment to the values that the Chief has set.
- Committee members were provided with some additional detail related to how the VPD currently engages with the community as well as how they are incorporating equity into their work. Examples included:
 - Officers attending and participating in the City’s 71 neighborhood association meetings
 - Officers attending culturally specific community events with groups
 - The development of the SW Washington Training Academy which hosts a very diverse officer pool
 - The development of the VPD’s Diversity Advisory Task Force, which the Chief regularly taps for guidance. They are also offered an opportunity to participate in the rank advancement interview process for VPD officers.

Edits to the PCAC Draft Recommendation Report (Christine)

The group reviewed a draft version of a committee report, which includes a description of the committee’s work, a summary of what has been covered over the tenure of the group, and the proposed funding recommendation that has been informed by the committee’s priorities. William will update the draft recommendations using any feedback given verbally or in writing during the meeting and will send an editable version of the draft out to the committee members in case they have any follow-up revision suggestions or comments.

Questions and comments from the committee

- Gabriela: Do we know that the percentage of taxes that would be associated with the levy and bond?
 - Eric: The amount is around \$28/month or \$345/year.

Committee Vote (Christine & William)

William facilitated an anonymous Mentimeter activity for the committee members to vote on the proposed funding option. Committee members could vote Yes or No.

- 11 of 12 present committee member voted yes
- One member did not vote.

Questions and comments from the committee

As part of the Mentimeter activity, committee members were asked if there were any questions or comments that they’d like to share with the City Manager and City Council as they consider the levy. The anonymous entries were as follows:

- Thank you for the designed process
- Can you claim the payment on your taxes?
- My notes are on physical handout

- Chief – thank you for your honest answers.
- I would like to have follow up meetings to look at outcomes and further collaborations
- I appreciate all of the information and new knowledge on city budget to better understand how that affects our community
- Well done on addressing and anticipating many of our questions and concerns.
- Thank you for the dinners
- Will the bond levy have specifics or will it just be a general request for money?
 - Eric: This is constrained by the actual language of the ballot title. This proposal will also have to go through a ballot resolution that can be very specific. Two ways to ensure that funds will be directed and spent in a manner that is consistent. This committee has a role to play in that.
- I would to have email invites for new officers sworn in
 - Chief Mori: We do that quarterly and an invite will be sent to committee members.
- Consider asking us to help with those rank interviews
 - Chief Mori: We can reach out to the committee members for support on this too, which is anticipated to happen for 18 months
- When is your next NOW class?
 - Chief Mori: We have one more coming up in 2024 and then the next won't be until 2025.
- How can we get involved with NOW?
 - Chief Mori: We can get an email out to committee members.
 - To volunteer, community members need to be able to pass a background check.
 - What do NOW volunteers do?
 - Chief Mori: They can patrol neighborhoods with vests and radios in pairs. They support ceremonial events, helping with missing seniors, children, etc.
 - Sidney: Is NOW/VPD involved with TIP (Trauma Intervention Program) volunteers?
 - Yes, we do. TIP are emotional responders to fire and police calls. To be a TIP volunteer requires around 50 hours' worth of training.
- How can we become more engaged with officers and the department, in general?
- Thank you for the dinners

General Takeaways

- Committee members were largely in favor of the proposed recommendation drafted by the city.
- Committee members expressed interest in continuing to support the work, noting options such as:
 - Volunteering with the Neighbors On Watch (NOW) program
 - Supporting in the interview process for VPD rank advancements

- Attending the swearing in event for new officers

Closing and Next Steps (William)

- We've been focused on finalizing the recommendation. The first workshop with the council is July 1. The due date to get something on the October ballot is August 5.
- Once the Council passes a resolution, it's forwarded to the Clark County Auditor's office, who oversees Vancouver elections. Then there's a call for council to identify pro/con committees. The council can appoint pro/con committees for each resolution. If the council is unable to find people willing to serve in those capacities, they can pass that to the auditor, who can make those appointments. Those statements are published in the voters pamphlet.
- People then vote on November 6.
- The election roughly coincides with the council's final considerations for the biennial budget. We can't speculatively include future revenue in the budget from a ballot initiative.
- Relative to advocacy for a ballot measure: The City and all of our agents and resources are explicitly prohibited for being used in facilitating advocacy one way or another. What we can do as a city organization is provide information and awareness. If there is a campaign for/against, that is something that must be organized and funded independently from the city.
- City Manager and Chief will do speakers circuits to give out the facts.
- Committee members can do advocacy work, just not in city buildings or during city facilitated meetings/events. The council does have the legal authority as a legislative body to endorse it and say they support it.
- Neighborhood associations can choose to host a neutral forum, but they can't host a rally for/against the ballot on a City-hosted Zoom meeting or endorse something in the NA newsletter since those are legal assets of the city.
- Lisa Brandl, Deputy City Manager. Her portfolio encompasses many departments that are supportive of operations of VPD (equity and inclusion team, HR, IT, Facilities, Communications & Engagement). Some of the things that are incorporated in the recommendation could also be resources that are better suited in our community engagement functions instead of within the VPD.
- Mark: NAACP general meeting is at the end of the month at 6pm. Guest speaker will be going over voter registration. Join via zoom!

Committee next steps

- William encouraged the committee to attend the July 1 Council workshop. He will send a calendar invite once that's confirmed.
- Next committee meeting will be in last week of September or first week of October (depends on City Manager appointment).
- During the meeting, members can meet the incoming City Manager and discuss topics for future meetings (Committee agreed that this seems like an appropriate time before meeting).

- Screening interviews for the finalists on June 29 in a closed executive session. From that, they'll select a top 2 or 3 finalist candidates that will go through a more public process sometime between July 18-22. On July 18/19, they'll host open community forums. One with CBOs and one with business folks. Committee members are encouraged to attend.

Christine asked the committee: What was the best part of the 6-meeting experience?

- Destiny: The best part for me is getting to know the community better and the behind-the-scenes of the VPD. We must rely on the media most times, so it was nice to get the concrete evidence of everything going on in our city from Chief Mori.
- Paul: I agree with Destiny. I enjoyed how organized the meetings and notes have been and the back end administration of the process (especially when missing meetings)
- Mark: Enjoyed the information received and the discussion from other committee members.
- JP: The stories from the officers including Chief Mori of the inner workings of the department. I feel a lot more connected to the community and the VPD's code of ethics. Like Paul mentioned, watching the ideas coalesce into an actual presentation was a great experience.
- Gabriela: I agree with everyone so far. The best part was to get to know Chief Mori and the officers 1-on-1 and see where we're at on demand for services and the level of services the VPD can provide. Relatedly, understanding what we demand from VPD and the work they're doing with the resources they have/don't have. I appreciate seeing the human side of the department as well as the organization of the meetings. Having been on the police accountability committee in 2017, this has been a very different and more positive experience for me and I'm grateful for that.
- Sarah: I came into this space to listen, but I also want to express that I'm very grateful that all of you were willing to show up and be engaged. This isn't a small commitment to the Council; you've spent hours with us and provided candid thoughts and opinions and shared stories with us. I greatly appreciate that and hope to carry forward your stories to the dais and be an advocate for what I heard during these meetings.
- Martha: I appreciate the overall professionalism of everyone involved in this group. City staff were phenomenal and did a good job of predicting questions and were also very responsive to the questions they hadn't prepared for. I also appreciate the clarity of information and how accessible that's made the process.
- Dominick: I agree with what everyone has said. I appreciate the collaboration we've done. The guidance and overall organization of this process has been very helpful. I feel closer to the community and that all voices have been heard. It's been great hearing from the Chief and Assistant Chief as well.
- Anne: I agree with Sarah. We've been on several different committees. This group felt different it has been great to hear the voices of new individuals that we haven't met in the community. Staff came up with a well thought out work plan to guide this process as well.
- Jim: Thanks William, Christine, and Tay for the organization and facilitation of the meeting. I also appreciate Chief Mori being more vulnerable about his values.

- Sidney: Thanks Christine and Tay for your facilitation. I learned a lot and felt like the packets can be shared outwardly with people to help educate others. I am looking forward to what the committee does in the future.
- Cindy: I appreciate getting to know the Chief more, especially from discussions today. I feel like the community can make an impact, which I was skeptical about initially in this process. I feel hopeful even with transitions on the horizon.
- Eric: This committee has felt different than other committees that I've been a part of. The difference is that this group of people are folks that volunteered to participate to be part of making a difference. In the past, we tended more toward hand picking individuals. The diversity of lived experience in the room has been the secret sauce.
- Chief Mori: This is why I love Vancouver. I feel humbled and I won't let the committee down.
- William: I'm very grateful for the work this group has done. I get energy from spending time with committee members. It's a privilege to serve the committee.
- Lisa: Relevant to the prospect of a ballot measure – we're able to thread the needle to get an idea of the sentiment we do by conducting a community survey. We contract with DHM, a well-respected surveying firm to do phone and text surveys that ask community members a series of questions about basic satisfaction in Vancouver. What's different about the most recent survey is that we asked a question about community tolerance around different funding mechanisms as well as a question around public safety and what the community would like to see the VPD focus on. We're looking to gather the opinions of at least 400 Vancouver community members (which is the statistically significant amount). We should have the results back before July 10 and those will be posted publicly once the City Manager and City Council reviews. We're also going to launch an online prioritization tool to prioritize the 8 focus areas outlined in the strategic plan.
 - Martha: Can this be pushed to the committee?
 - Lisa: Yes.
 - Martha: Is the prioritization tool going to be on the website or Be Heard?
 - Lisa: Generally, those types of things will be on Be Heard, but we're using a different platform than normal called Alchemer to gather the survey data.

Action Items

- William will send out an updated report that will incorporate the edits requested in this evening's meeting.
- William will also send committee members a Google Drive link where they can review the edits made and propose more, if desired