

September 19, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Gender Equity, Safe Communities, New Americans and Education Committee (GESCNA-Ed) members
From: Greg Doss, Analyst
Subject: Police Staffing Issues on the 9-19 GESCNA-Ed Committee Agenda

On Thursday, September 19, 2019, the Gender Equity, Safe Communities, New Americans and Education (GESCNA-Ed) Committee will discuss three topics related to sworn officer staffing at the Seattle Police Department (SPD):

1. The quarterly [Sworn Staffing Report](#) required under Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) 38-6-A-2.
2. A report on the [hiring bonus program](#) authorized in [CB 119468](#).
3. The Mayor's [Report on Recruitment and Retention](#) for the Seattle Police Department (SPD).

SPD and Executive staff will present to the GESCNA-Ed Committee information that touches on all of the above topics, with a central focus on the Mayor's Report on Recruitment and Retention. The Executive recently announced that the Mayor's Proposed Budget will invest \$1.6 million across the 12 initiatives identified in the recruitment and retention report. Therefore, the Council will have opportunities for further discussion of the police staffing issue in the upcoming budget session. Council Central Staff will address the recruitment and retention report initiatives in the SPD Issue Identification Memo.

This memo is intended to provide the GESCNA-Ed Committee with background and context. In particular, the memo provides (a) background on SPD sworn staffing challenges; and (b) an update on SPD recruitment, separations, and associated budget implications.

Background:

In 2018, SPD experienced its lowest hiring rate in five years while also realizing a higher-than-normal separation rate of existing officers. These challenges led to a net decrease (41) in the number of officers employed by SPD. Table 1 provides a picture of hiring and attrition at SPD over the last seven years as well as SPD's most current forecast for 2019 and 2020. The most recent forecast (through August 2019) indicates that SPD expects eight net new officers hired by the end of this year.

Table 1. Police Hires and Separations through August 2019

Year	Number of Recruit Hires	Number of Lateral Hires	Separations (incl. dropouts)	Net New Hires
2012	25	7	-36	-4
2013	72	13	-39	46
2014	69	12	-59	22
2015	76	20	-72	24
2016	85	22	-67	40
2017	77	25	-79	23
2018	59	9	-109	-41
2019	84	15*	-91	8
2020	84	20	-91	13

Grayed areas include estimates

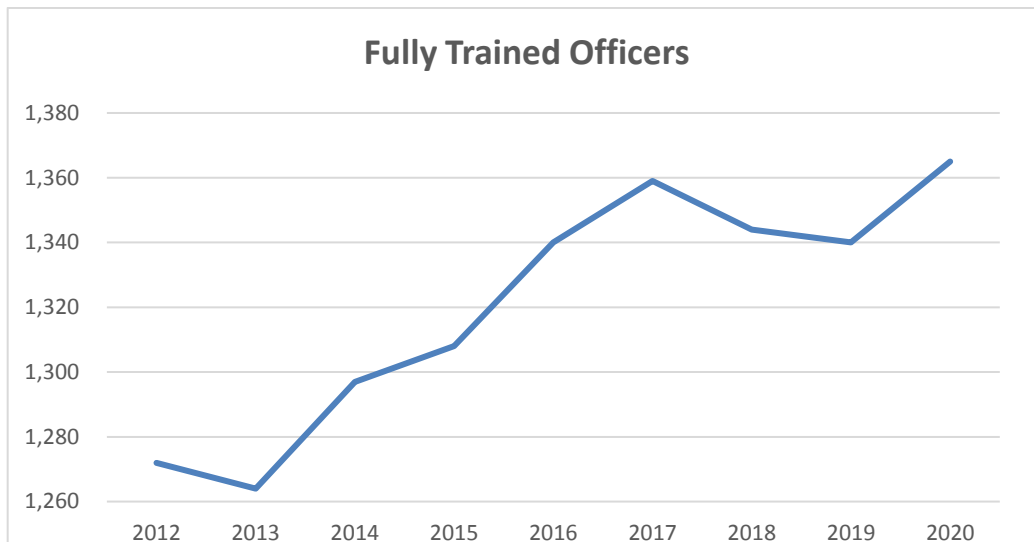
* Includes Two Rehires

SPD indicates that the higher number of separations and difficulty recruiting in 2018 resulted from a combination of factors, including a national shortage in police recruit applications, incentives offered by other local jurisdictions (officers hired away from the SPD to other police departments received up to \$15k as a signing bonus), higher housing costs in the Seattle area and commute times, historically low unemployment, negative perceptions of policing and officer morale. SPD's forecasted level of separations (*i.e.*, 91 annually for both 2019 and 2020) remains higher than normal because SPD expects several of these trends to continue in the near term. The Mayor's report on recruitment and retention provides a more detailed analysis of the trends in both recruitment and retention.

Staffing Analysis:

Projected Sworn Strength in 2019 and 2020: Fully trained officers are individuals who have successfully completed the Criminal Justice Training Academy (Academy) and Phase II Field Training, which consists of answering calls in conjunction with an assigned training officer. Fully trained officers can be deployed through the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system as individual 9-1-1 responders or serve other specialty functions. As Chart 1 illustrates, in 2018 the number of fully trained officers at SPD declined compared to the prior year. This decline was a result of officer separations outpacing new hires and lateral hires. The SPD is projecting that the number of fully trained officers will flatten out by the end of 2019 and turn positive in 2020.

Chart 1: Fully Trained Officers as of 8-31-2019



1) Fully Trained Officers: total count of sworn personnel who have successfully completed Phase II-Field Training

Impacts on Patrol Staffing: When confronting staffing situations where the separation rate outpaces hires, SPD has historically attempted to prioritize the Patrol force (officers that are responsible for responding to 9-1-1 calls and other interactions with the public such as ACT, CPT or Beats)¹ above other departmental functions such as investigations or specialty units such as the Canine Unit.

SPD’s quarterly point-in-time counts of 9-1-1 responders, a good measure of Patrol strength, was approximately 538 officers at year-end 2018. Through August 2019, the number of 9-1-1 responders remains at 538 (unchanged from the number at the end of 2018). The maintenance of 9-1-1 responders occurred in the context of the declining number of officer hires and increased separations that were realized in 2018. Other Patrol categories (e.g., ACT, CPT and Beats) are down by 17 officers, the majority of which can be found in Beats, which are down 11 officers from the beginning of the year. It is possible that the Chief may be backfilling for these officers through the use of overtime emphasis patrols. It is within the Chief’s authority to deploy emphasis officers and such deployment can ensure that there is not a loss of street strength.

¹ ACT is the Anti-Crime Team Officers, CPT is the Community Police Team Officers, Beats officers are Footbeat and Bike Officers.

Table 2. SPD Hiring and Attrition in 2019

	Performance Through August			Forecast Sept through Dec		
	Original Projection through August	Actuals through August	Difference	Original Annual Projection	Revised Annual Projections	Difference
Recruits	56	56	0	84	84	0
Lateral Hires	15	8	(7)	20	13	(7)
Re-Hires	0	2	2	0	2	2
Hiring Totals	71	66	(5)	104	99	(5)
Separations	(66)	(67)	(1)	(90)	(91)	(1)
Net Totals	5	(1)	(6)	14	8	(6)

Measuring Performance against the original 2019 Staffing Plan:

- As shown in Table 2, SPD is achieving its new recruit targets but falling short on its target for laterals. Through August, the department has hired 56 recruits (consistent with the original target of 56) and made eight lateral hires (seven short of the original August target).
- SPD has experienced a negligible increase in separations. SPD has lost 67 officers and recruits through August. SPD had forecasted that it would lose 66 officers and recruits through August. While there is little variance between actuals and forecast, it should be noted that the 2018 forecast assumed a higher separation rate than has been seen in recent history.
- If SPD meets its projections for September through December, it will gain a net of eight new hires in 2019. Realization of a net of eight net hires, immediately following a year with a net of negative 41 hires is a significant turn-around. It is possible that the hiring bonus or additional recruitment activities are positively impacting SPD's ability to hire.

SPD has revised its year-end forecast to reflect the fact that hiring and separation actuals through August are not hitting previously set targets. SPD has not adjusted its forecast for September 2019 through December 2019 and may ultimately realize a different mix of hires

and separations than were originally forecasted and funded in the 2019-20 Adopted Budget. Such a situation could result in the accrual of salary savings.

Current use of Salary Savings: SPD indicates that the 2019 Adopted Budget includes 1,467 funded officer positions, and as of August 2019 SPD projects there will be 1,382 Sworn Officers by the end of 2019.² It should be noted that SPD has always used some of its sworn position salary savings to pay for recruits that are in the academy and student officers in field training. Consequently, the number of sworn officers and the number of funded positions will never be a precise match.

When necessary, SPD also diverts some of its sworn position allocation to pay for overtime for the purpose of providing additional, temporary staffing or emphasis patrols at the precincts. This process is occurring now as SPD concurrently (a) realizes sworn salary savings and (b) is spending at higher-than-predicted levels its overtime allotment for emphasis patrols and patrol augmentation. Finally, some of the sworn position funding that is realized as salary savings may be cut or repurposed for another use. This latter category includes the \$3.96 General Fund reduction to salary savings in the Mayor's 2019 Proposed Budget and the \$1.4 million salary savings cut that Council made to the 2019 Adopted Budget. SPD has also indicated that it is currently using some of its salary savings to pay for the new recruit and lateral hire bonuses (\$7,500 and \$15,000 respectively).

The Mayor recently announced that her 2020 Proposed Budget will include \$847,000 to continue into next year the 2019 community-based emphasis patrols. Unless the Mayor's 2020 Proposed Budget makes baseline changes to SPD's budget, it is likely that SPD will also recognize salary savings that SPD will accrue in 2020 if it does not meet the original 2019 staffing goals.

Mayor's Office Recruitment and Retention Report:

The Mayor's Office convened a workgroup comprised of staff from the Mayor's Office, SPD, Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR), City Budget Office (CBO), City Council Central Staff and Councilmember staff, and others to perform an analysis of the challenges SPD is currently facing in recruiting and retaining officers. The workgroup met monthly since March 2019 to review national best practices, study SPD's performance using available internal and public data, and develop long-term strategies to meet recruitment and retention goals informed by this research.

² Total Sworn Officers outnumber Fully Trained Officers because not all sworn officers are fully trained. Recruits that take the officer oath are sworn officers, but they still must undergo Phase II ride-along training.

In a report released last week, the workgroup proposed the implementation of 12 initiatives across the below areas to address the challenges that SPD faces when meeting its service goals:

- **Recruitment:** Three initiatives that seek to increase the number and diversity of applicants.
- **Hiring:** Four initiatives that seek to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the hiring process.
- **Retention:** Five initiatives that seek to retain SPD staff.

The Mayor has indicated that she will include in her 2020 Proposed Budget \$1.6 million to fund the initiatives identified in the report. SPD staff is planning on providing an extensive overview of these initiatives at the September 19, 2019 GESCNA-Ed Committee meeting. The overview will cover specific strategies that support the initiatives as well as the implementation timelines and the personnel resources necessary to realize identified goals.

Because the initiatives are covered in the Mayor's 2020 Proposed Budget, the Council will have an opportunity to review and discuss the investments as part of issue identification. Council Central Staff will address the recruitment and retention report initiatives in the SPD Issue Identification Memo.

Recruitment Bonus Program (CB 119468):

[CB 119468](#) authorized SPD to provide hiring incentives of up to \$15,000 for new recruit hires or lateral police hires. Since the time of the bill's enactment, the Mayor has in practice provided \$7,500 incentives to recruit hires and \$15,000 to lateral transfer hires. CB 119468 also required that SPD and the City Budget Office transmit to Council by September 23, 2019 an interim status report that will evaluate how the hiring bonuses are working relative to other recruitment tactics and whether they are effective incentives in the marketplace for police hires. SPD must also conduct a cost-benefit analysis that makes a recommendation about whether to continue the incentive program after its sunset date of June 30, 2020. At the time of the writing of this report, SPD had not transmitted the report to the City Council.

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Director
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