

February 21, 2019

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Public Safety & Human Services Committee  
**From:** Greg Doss, Analyst  
**Subject:** Police Staffing Update

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On Tuesday, February 25, 2020, the Public Safety & Human Services (PSHS) Committee will discuss three topics related to sworn officer staffing at the Seattle Police Department (SPD):

1. The 2019 year-end sworn staffing data requested under 2020 Statement of Legislative Intent [SPD 13-A-2](#).
2. A report on the recruitment activities over the prior year; the planned recruitment activity for the near term (e.g., 6-12 months); and a summary of the information captured in officer separations surveys, per the requirements of 2019 Statement of Legislative Intent [SPD 38-6-A-2](#).
3. A brief update on the [Mayor's Recruitment and Retention Initiative](#), which was funded at \$1.24 million in the 2020 Adopted Budget.

Central Staff, SPD and Executive staff will present to the PSHS Committee information that touches on all the above topics with a central focus on the 2019 year-end sworn staffing data. The Council will have opportunities for further discussion of the Recruitment and Retention Initiative when the Executive sends its response to the Council's 2020 Statement of Legislative Intent [SPD 12-A-2](#). This response is due to the Council on May 29, 2020.

This memo is intended to provide the PSHS Committee with background and context for the staffing discussion. In particular, the memo provides (a) background on SPD sworn staffing challenges; and (b) an update on SPD recruitment and separations.

### Background

In 2018, the Department experienced difficulty hiring new officers 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 at SPD over the last eight years as well as the Department's forecast for 2020.

The Department indicates that the higher number of separations and difficulty recruiting in 2018 resulted from a combination of factors. These factors include 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 \$15,000 as a signing bonus), higher housing costs in the Seattle area, commute times, historically low unemployment, negative perceptions of policing,

and officer morale. SPD’s forecasted level of separations (i.e., 91 in 2020) remains higher than normal because SPD expects several of these trends to continue in the near term.

To improve police hiring, the Council passed [Ordinance 125784](#) in March of 2019 which authorized SPD to provide hiring incentives of up to \$15,000 for new recruit hires or lateral police hires. Since the ordinance’s enactment, the Mayor has, in practice, provided \$7,500 incentives to recruit hires and \$15,000 to lateral transfer hires. Ordinance 125784 also requires that SPD conduct a cost-benefit analysis that makes a recommendation about whether to continue the incentive program after its sunset date of June 30, 2020.

The [Mayor’s Recruitment and Retention Initiative](#), was developed in 2019 with the intent of reversing the negative hiring and retention trends noted above. The initiative is funded at \$1.24 million in the 2020 Adopted Budget and consists of 12 specific actions SPD will undertake to increase hiring, diversify recruits, and improve officer morale and retention.

### 2019 Year-End Staffing Update

Central Staff worked with Executive staff to provide the information and data in Table 1. The data is compiled from SPD’s 2019 fourth quarter staffing report transmitted on January 25, 2019 in response to Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) 38-6-A-2.

*Table 1. SPD Staffing History*

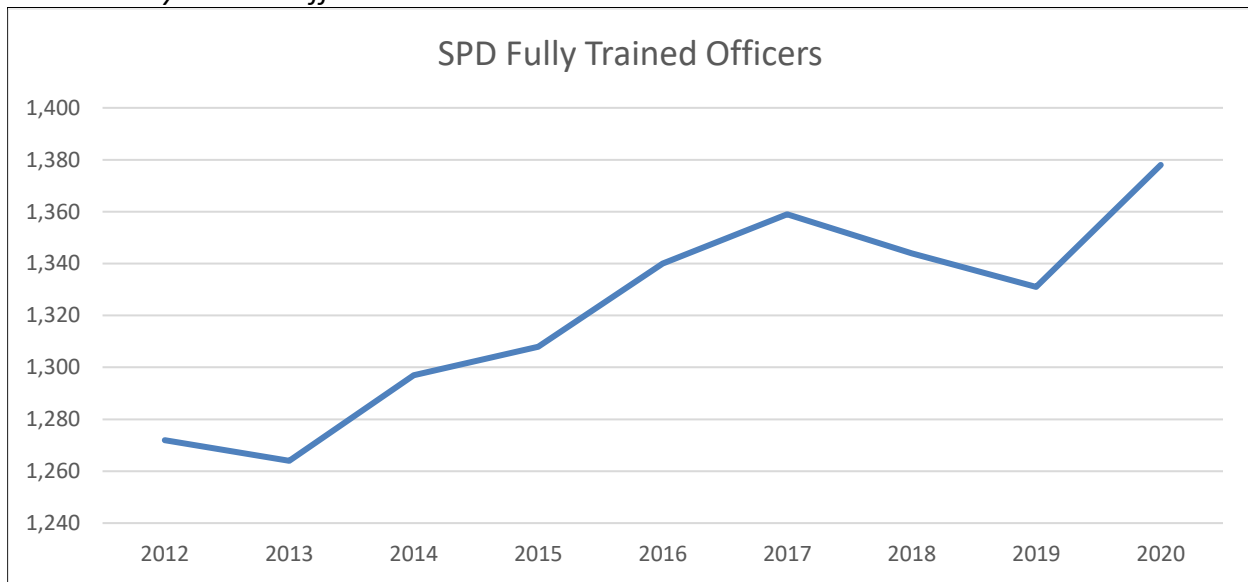
| Year    | Funded FTE (1) | Recruits | Laterals & Rehires | Separations | Net New Hires | All Sworn Officers (2) | Fully Trained Officers (3) |
|---------|----------------|----------|--------------------|-------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2012    | 1,300          | 25       | 7                  | 36          | (4)           | 1,281                  | 1,272                      |
| 2013    | 1,315          | 72       | 13                 | 39          | 46            | 1,308                  | 1,264                      |
| 2014    | 1,359          | 69       | 12                 | 59          | 22            | 1,330                  | 1,297                      |
| 2015    | 1,375          | 76       | 20                 | 72          | 24            | 1,349                  | 1,308                      |
| 2016    | 1,422          | 85       | 22                 | 67          | 40            | 1,390                  | 1,340                      |
| 2017    | 1,457          | 77       | 25                 | 79          | 23            | 1,424                  | 1,359                      |
| 2018    | 1,457          | 59       | 9                  | 109         | (41)          | 1,388                  | 1,344                      |
| 2019    | 1,467          | 92       | 16                 | 92          | 16            | 1,371                  | 1,331                      |
| 2020(4) | 1,497          | 84       | 20                 | 91          | 13            | 1,415                  | 1,378                      |

- (1) **Funded FTE:** Consists of funding for sworn officers, student officers and recruits
- (2) **All Sworn Officers:** Total count of sworn personnel who have graduated from the Academy and earned a sworn commission. There is a five-month delay between the time an officer is hired, completes the academy and takes the sworn oath.
- (3) **Fully Trained Officers:** Total count of sworn personnel who have successfully completed Phase II-Field Training.
- (4) **Projected Staffing in 2020**

## Fully Trained Officers

Fully trained officers have successfully completed the Criminal Justice Training 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 in the department. As Chart 1 illustrates, in 2018 there was a dip in the number of fully trained officers at SPD. This dip is a result of officer separations outpacing new hires and lateral hires. The Department is projecting that its numbers of fully trained officers will return to prior highs by the middle of 2020.

*Chart 1. Fully Trained Officers*



## Patrol Staffing

When confronting staffing situations where the separation rate outpaces hires, SPD has historically attempted to prioritize the Patrol Force (officers responsible for responding to 9-1-1 calls and other interactions with the public such as ACT, CPT or Beats<sup>1</sup>) above other functions such as investigations or specialty units such as the Canine Unit.

As a good measure of patrol strength, SPD performs quarterly point-in-time counts of 9-1-1 responders. They reported 537 9-1-1 responders at year-end 2019. This is relatively unchanged from the number of 9-1-1 responders 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 24 officers, the majority of which are found in Beats, down 17 officers from 2018.

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

Table 2. Patrol Staffing Report as of 12/31/19<sup>2</sup>

| Job Categories   | EAST PCT  |            | NORTH PCT |            | SOUTH PCT |            | SOUTHWEST PCT |           | WEST PCT  |            | Grand Total |
|------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|
|                  | Sergeant  | Officer    | Sergeant  | Officer    | Sergeant  | Officer    | Sergeant      | Officer   | Sergeant  | Officer    |             |
| 911              | 12        | 81         | 22        | 127        | 14        | 101        | 9             | 64        | 13        | 94         | 537         |
| ACT              | 1         | 6          | 1         | 7          | 1         | 6          | 1             | 6         | 1         | 4          | 34          |
| Beats            | 2         | 8          | 1         | 5          |           |            | 1             | 4         | 4         | 26         | 51          |
| CPT              | 1         | 5          | 1         | 7          | 1         | 3          |               | 3         | 1         | 6          | 28          |
| Precinct Support |           |            |           |            |           | 1          |               |           |           |            | 1           |
| Seattle Center   |           |            |           |            |           |            |               |           | 1         | 2          | 3           |
| Stationmaster    |           |            |           |            |           |            |               | 1         |           | 1          | 2           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>16</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>146</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>111</b> | <b>11</b>     | <b>78</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>133</b> | <b>656</b>  |

As seen in Table 1, the Department made 13 net new hires in 2019. As the new employees complete their recruit and student officer training, the Department will likely see increases in its Patrol staffing.

### Redeployments to the West Precinct

A recent news story indicated SPD has bolstered its West Precinct Patrol strength in response to the [recent Pine Street shooting](#) that left one person dead and seven wounded. Staff asked about the SPD’s potential redeployments and received the following response:

*“SPD has not permanently moved any staff between precincts in connection with the City’s response to 3rd and Pine. The 3rd and Pine patrols are overseen by the Seattle Police Operations Center (SPOC) and staffed like special events. Sworn personnel from throughout the department are assigned on a rotating basis, based on day-of availability. The department is deploying around two dozen sworn employees across three shifts every day.”*

SPD staff also indicated that the majority of staff augmenting West Precinct are sourced from precinct-based specialty units (e.g., Anti-Crime Teams, Community Police Teams and Bike Squads) working on a mix of regular time and over time.

### Police hiring under a consent decree

The PSHS Chair asked staff to research the question of whether police agencies under a consent decree experience greater difficulty hiring new police officers when compared with agencies that are not under a consent decree. Staff did not find any research that could answer this specific question.

<sup>2</sup> **The report includes the following:** Personnel who are unavailable due to vacation, training, limited duty, or short term illness or injury, which is addressed by shift relief analysis; Half time officers; Officers in acting sergeant assignments (counted as sergeants); and Phase III student officers, who have completed all officer training yet remain in probationary status.

**The report excludes the following:** Phase I (recruits) and Phase II student officers; Precinct detectives; and Personnel who are on extended sick leave or activated military leave.

In the case of SPD, the number of sworn officers increased by 90 between the consent decree period of 2012 and 2019. It is possible that the increase could have been greater if the consent decree was not in place. In order to determine the effect of the consent decree on hiring, a researcher would need to isolate and account for many non-related factors that drive hiring such as recessions, prolonged contract negotiations, hiring bonuses, and changes to recruitment strategies.

A Department of Justice staff member indicated to Central Staff that police agency hiring efforts are beginning to be tracked in consent decrees. One such example is the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) consent decree, which requires the following:

*NOPD agrees to train all current and new staff assigned to the Recruitment Unit on recruiting a qualified and diverse workforce, including training on employment law. NOPD agrees to establish specific performance criteria to evaluate recruitment staff effectiveness in hiring increasing numbers of high-quality recruits.*

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Executive Director  
Dan Eder, Deputy Director