

Amendment 4 to CB 120916 Crowd Management Ordinance

Sponsor: Councilmember Moore

Add CPC Recitals and Recommendations on Blast Ball Deployment

Effect: This amendment would amend CB 120916, as amended by Amendment 1, to require that the Police Department’s policy on use of less lethal weapons (SPD 8.300) shall require that blast balls be deployed only when directed away from people, underhand, at a distance of at least 10 yards. It would also incorporate two new recitals that were suggested by the Community Police Commission:

WHEREAS, the CPC indicated in a January 8, 2025 letter to the City Council that “blast balls, as used in Seattle over the last decade, have a demonstrated track record when used according to past policy of inflicting injury, including serious injury, to individuals including bystanders, journalists, lawful demonstrators and in at least one instance, a police officer, when past policy intended to reduce the risk of such injury but was unable to achieve that outcome”; and

WHEREAS, the CPC letter also indicates that “when other law enforcement agencies assist the Seattle Police Department in responding to major events or disruptions, their actions have the potential to impact the rights and wellbeing of Seattle residents and to affect public confidence in policing to the same extent as actions of SPD officers, and members of the public should be able to expect their rights to be observed by any law enforcement officer deployed in the City of Seattle by agreement and request of the City of Seattle;”

Background: On January 8, 2025, the Community Police Commission sent to City Council members and the Mayor a letter that requested that blast balls be “directed away from people, underhand, at a distance of at least 10 yards.” The CPC also requested the addition of new recitals in CB 120916, two paragraphs of which are included in this amendment.

The current SPD policy on blast ball deployment (8.300-POL-10 Blast Balls) notes that, “when used for crowd control and dispersal purposes, when feasible, sworn employees will direct blast balls toward an open space.” It also says that “the preferred method of blast ball deployment is low deployment (e.g., bowling style).” Although, it also allows sworn employees to use a high deployment (e.g., overhand throw) when “the need for a farther deployment or the need to get around an obstruction outweighs the risk created by the separating munition.”

On page 3 of CB 120916, add two new recitals as follows:

WHEREAS, the CPC indicated in a January 8, 2025 letter to the City Council that “blast balls, as used in Seattle over the last decade, have a demonstrated track record when used according to past policy of inflicting injury, including serious injury, to individuals including bystanders, journalists, lawful demonstrators and in at least one instance, a police officer, when past policy intended to reduce the risk of such injury but was unable to achieve that outcome”;
and

WHEREAS, the CPC letter also indicates that “when other law enforcement agencies assist the Seattle Police Department in responding to major events or disruptions, their actions have the potential to impact the rights and wellbeing of Seattle residents and to affect public confidence in policing to the same extent as actions of SPD officers, and members of the public should be able to expect their rights to be observed by any law enforcement officer deployed in the City of Seattle by agreement and request of the City of Seattle”;

After the third paragraph of subsection H to CB 120916, as amended, and add the following:

Additionally, blast balls shall be deployed only when directed away from people, underhand, at a distance of at least 10 yards from the nearest person.