



Police Community Advisory Committee Report

City Manager's Office

July 1, 2024



Table of Contents

Message from the City Manager	1
Acknowledgements	2
Committee Overview.....	3
Meeting Summary	3
Funding Priorities: Desired Outcomes and Impacts.....	4
Staffing Recommendation	6
Funding Recommendation	6
Benefits to this approach.....	7
Potential challenges.....	7
Additional Considerations	8
Further Conversation.....	9

Message from the City Manager

Community safety through policing is one of the most important, nuanced and complex services the City provides. This is particularly true in recent years as the importance of social justice and equity in policing has reemerged as a community priority. Over the last decade, the City Manager's Office has engaged the community in multiple ways around the services, outcomes, transparency and accountability of the Vancouver Police Department. Building on this foundation, in early 2024 I invited the community to come together in the next chapter of engagement with the City on policing matters.



The work of this committee is severalfold. Initially, I asked the committee to review the current levels of service, staffing and outcomes VPD is delivering and trends in demand for service, such as call volume and criminal cases. Based on this review, I asked the committee to advise on community values and priorities relative to a proposed increase in staffing capacity developed by the Office of the Police Chief. The results of that discussion are memorialized in this report and recommendation.

While this recommendation is ready for Council's consideration, the work of this committee is not complete. Presuming success at each phase of a multi-stage plan, I welcome the committee's ongoing engagement in the coming years that will assure accountability in implementing the recommendations contained herein and transparency into the results achieved by these investments in VPD. And because we live and work in a complex and dynamic environment, to serve as an ongoing sounding board and conscience of the community as we consider the inevitable changes that will be needed to achieve our desired outcomes.

I am grateful for the insight, advice, and perspective the dedicated volunteers on the Community Advisory Committee on Policing have provided over the last six months, which led to the recommendations in this report. I look forward to our community continuing to benefit from the wisdom of their diverse lived experience well into the future.

Eric Holmes,
Vancouver City Manager

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our committee members, City staff and facilitators from Envirolssues for your engagement and support throughout this process:

Committee Members

- Martha Baumgarten
- Paul Burgess
- Gabriela Ewing
- Mark Frazier
- Lester Griffin
- Josie Hyde
- James Kirkendall
- Sidney Morgan
- Jean-Pierre Parent
- Cindy Reed
- Dominick Rose
- Destiny Trevino
- Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle
- Mayor Pro Tem Erik Paulsen
- Councilor Sarah Fox

City Staff

- William Cooley
- Anna Quintrell
- Nikki Chen
- Tanya Gray
- Police Chief Jeff Mori
- Assistant Police Chief Erica Nilsen
- Kim Kapp
- Jaycee Elliott

Facilitators

- Christine Moses, PhD
- Tay Stone



Committee Overview

The Police Community Advisory Committee was assembled in January 2024 to advise the City Manager on issues relating to police services in Vancouver. The committee includes 12 community members and three members of the City Council, including Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle, Mayor Pro Tem Erik Paulsen and Councilor Sarah Fox. Following an extensive outreach effort, the City received 110 applications to participate on the committee. The City selected 13 committee members who bring diverse skills, knowledge and experience to the committee. While one member ultimately could not participate, 12 community members have consistently been active participants.

Members of the committee will continue to meet in the coming months to help guide future investments in VPD capacity, advise the City on approaches to community engagement, engage in shared problem-solving around community safety issues and support the City's accountability to outcomes identified in this report.

Meeting Summary

Since March, the committee has met six times to help identify community safety needs, gaps in services and ways to improve policing and public safety in Vancouver. After establishing group agreements and learning about the Vancouver community, committee members reviewed recent community feedback on public safety. The group discussed the department's current staffing levels and how those compare to state and national averages and other jurisdictions in the state of Washington.

Over the course of these meetings, the committee was invited to reflect on current gaps in services, to ask questions of City staff and to work as a group to identify funding priorities. The committee hosted multiple officers, who spoke about a range of programs and functions, including the Traffic Unit, Crime Reduction Unit, Neighborhood Police Officer program and Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) Unit. Committee members also spent significant time speaking directly with the City Manager and members of the police department, including Chief Jeff Mori and Assistant Chief Erica Nilsen. During meetings four, five and six, the group reviewed possible funding options and discussed the City Manager's proposed budget scenario.

Funding Considerations

Committee members were asked to evaluate the proposed funding options, using these funding considerations:



Funding Priorities: Desired Outcomes and Impacts

Committee members and staff have identified the following priorities, outcomes and impacts to guide how new police funding should be spent. The outcomes and impacts will be refined further during committee meetings in 2024 and 2025.

Build and strengthen relationships between VPD and the community

- Increase collaboration with a wide range of community-based organizations, including:
 - Nonprofit organizations
 - Social service agencies
 - Housing providers
 - Faith communities
 - School groups
 - Businesses
 - Neighborhood associations
- Increase the number of neighborhood police officers
- Increase the number of positive officer-initiated interactions
 - Adopt organization-wide approaches to community policing
- Increase perception of public safety and foster positive attitudes toward VPD, as measured by community surveys
 - Survey questions may include:
 - How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?
 - In general, I feel that the police in my area...
 - Treat everyone fairly, regardless of who they are
 - Provide the same quality of service to all individuals
 - Treat community members with respect
 - Are approachable
 - Listen to and consider the concerns of local residents
 - Ensure that survey data can be separated by race, ethnicity, age and area of the City to make sure we are meeting the needs of all community members

Support partnerships that help reduce conflict and prevent crime

- Expand capacity for co-response and complimentary programs aimed at addressing urgent mental health or substance use concerns
 - Buttress programs, such as Columbia River Mental Health's Community Response Team, which operates along the Fourth Plain corridor in collaboration with community organizations and faith communities
 - Through hiring or partnerships, expand access to social workers to help assess mental health needs or assist families in crisis
- Increase the number of community members trained in conflict resolution
 - Create neighborhood conflict resolution hubs or coalitions to support community safety
 - Increase opportunities to prevent and interrupt conflict before it escalates into crime

Maintain and improve overall VPD capacity and level of service

- Hire additional officers and non-sworn staff
 - Increase the number of sworn staff and the number of officers per capita to meet the needs of our rapidly growing community

- Increase the number of non-sworn staff supporting records, evidence, analysis, community engagement and communications
- Recruit, train and retain officers from the community who reflect the diversity of Vancouver's residents and ethical standards established by leadership
- Address the department's investigation backlog
 - Increase the number of detectives assigned to investigate crime
 - Ensure that priority crimes are investigated
- Prioritize drug crime and other crime linked to violence
- Ensure that call response times and access to police services are equitable across the community
 - By neighborhood or area of the city
 - By time of day
 - By call type

Retain and support VPD staff

- Strengthen organizational culture, emphasizing mental health, work-life balance and peer support
- Create and implement a formal officer-retention strategy to mitigate voluntary attrition
- Ensure that all officers and staff have access to mental health support, particularly following critical incidents or in cases where vicarious trauma is likely
- Reduce the number of overtime hours worked by officers and staff

Utilize technology to improve efficiency and community safety

- Expand the Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) program
- Implement a camera-assisted traffic enforcement program to help reduce speeding and red-light violations
- Increase use of AI and other tools to assist with and gain efficiency and accuracy in report writing
- Create an online portal which will allow community members to report crimes online
 - Leading to reduced time for staff
 - Increasing access for community members



Staffing Recommendation

Initial proposal: The City Manager proposes hiring 80 additional sworn staff, including 69 patrol officers, detectives and neighborhood police officers. Eight sergeants, two lieutenants and one commander will be hired to manage and support new officers. The City will also hire 36 non-sworn staff to support essential functions, such as records, evidence, analysis, community engagement and communications. Annual and one-time costs for these positions in VPD are outlined in the table:

<u>Sworn</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>On-going Annual Cost per FTE</u>	<u>One-time Cost</u>
Officers + Detectives	69	\$340,000	\$46,000
Sergeants	8	\$387,000	\$49,000
Lieutenants	2	\$427,000	\$49,000
Commander	1	\$495,000	\$49,000
Non-sworn	36	\$102,000	
Total FTEs	116		

Today, the Vancouver Police Department's budget is \$76 million per year. To fully implement the hiring investments described above, VPD would need an additional \$36 million per year by 2030. This amount is sufficient to cover the cost of hiring and training new officers and to support the following investments in technology:

- Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) program
- Camera-assisted traffic enforcement
- Online reporting portal
- AI-assisted report-writing tools

Under the proposed approach, the City would seek to prioritize the hiring of sworn staff to build capacity more quickly. Non-sworn staff would be hired with an emphasis on positions that support essential department functions.

The funding will also include standing up a traffic enforcement camera program, including two FTE additional staff and additional capacity (four FTE) in the Homeless Assistance Response Team (HART) program, to enhance current capabilities in addressing issues resulting from individuals suffering from mental health issues.

Funding Recommendation

The proposed funding approach would include an initial six-year property tax levy lid lift in 2024, followed by a facilities bond in 2026 and a public safety sales tax in 2028.

Step One: Six-Year Property Tax Levy Lid Lift in 2024

- 50% passage required

Voter support will be asked for an increase in City levy of \$0.41 per \$1,000 assessed value in 2025. The total city levy is to grow at 5% annually for the subsequent five years; the levy rate in 2030 is to serve as the basis for all subsequent levies.

This funding will allow to fund the operating costs of the levy as well as the HART program expansion and establish the traffic enforcement camera program. The funding will also cover the design of a future police facility.

Step Two: Excess Facilities Bond Levy in 2026

- 60% passage and turnout validation required

A separate voter request is recommended to establish an excess facilities bond levy in 2026. Depending on the outcome of the facility's design process, the levy will likely be between \$70 and \$100 million. The excess levy will be in place until the debt service expires, typically 20 years after the bonds are issued.

Step Three: Voted Public Safety Sales Tax in 2028-29

- 50% passage required

A final voter request is recommended to implement a 1/10 of one percent sales tax to fund the escalating ongoing costs of the positions funded by the levy lid lift. The voted sales tax is estimated to generate approximately \$7.4 million in 2030.

The City and many other agencies across the state—including the Association of Washington Cities—have sought legislative action to allow this sales tax authority to be implemented councilmanically. The City is expected to continue this advocacy, and if successful, this sales tax may not require a ballot measure to adopt.

Benefits of this approach

After weighing the range of available options, using multiple funding mechanisms offers the most realistic way to address VPD's staffing, technology and facility needs. Given the total cost, these needs cannot be addressed by a single funding source, such as an individual property tax or sales tax. The proposed approach would include permanent, diversified revenue sources, which can scale with the growth of Vancouver's tax base. These funding sources would also provide greater flexibility, allowing the City to respond more effectively to changing demands for policing services.

The recommended approach would allow the City to address the most urgent needs around staffing and technology through the initial levy while providing the time and funding needed to properly study VPD's facility needs. Excess funding generated by the levy between 2025 and 2029 would be banked to help pay down the cost of a future facility bond. Instead of placing multiple funding measures onto a single ballot, which might lead voters to choose one funding option over another, the recommended approach would put funding measures before voters in separate elections every two years over a six-year period. Based on a review of past ballot measures, this approach is more likely to be supported by voters.

Potential challenges

Under the recommended scenario, voters will need to pass three separate ballot measures to fund VPD at the proposed level. If any individual measure fails to pass, the City will face potential shortfalls, which will require alternate funding sources, potential service reductions, or postponing the construction of new VPD facilities. The ability to sustain current levels of service and build capacity will be dependent on all three measures passing.

In addition to the potential challenges associated with a lack of passage, there are timing considerations associated with successful passage. If the initial levy passes in 2024, the City will begin collecting new revenue in 2025. However, it takes several months to recruit new staff, several additional months for new staff to complete the basic police academy, and several more months after that to complete field officer training with the Vancouver Police Department. It takes approximately 12-18 months from when a new officer is funded and authorized to when that position is filled with a fully trained and capable person to provide service. Given this reality, the community – even if supportive of the initial levy in 2024 – is unlikely to see a measurable change in service level until mid-2026.

The proposed tax measures will raise the cost of living for all Vancouver residents. While the cost of property taxes will be felt most directly by homeowners, increased costs will likely be passed along to renters in the form of higher rents. A public safety sales tax increase, while minimal, would raise costs for all who shop in Vancouver. According to the [Department of Revenue](#), these taxes, like most taxes in Washington, are regressive and inequitable. This is because lower-income households pay a greater percentage of their income on excise and property taxes, while higher-income households pay a lower percentage of income for the same taxes. Vancouver community members have consistently listed housing and affordable housing as among their top concerns over the past four years. Concerns about increased costs could be a barrier to passage for one or more of the proposed funding sources.

It is also hard to predict the electoral landscape with a high degree of certainty. While voters have historically supported public safety measures in Vancouver, including the passage of Proposition 2 to support fire and emergency medical services in 2022, things may change between now and 2030. Over the next six years, voters may be asked to support additional taxes or levies from Clark County or local school districts. Competing tax measures could make passing measures on future ballots more challenging.

Additional Considerations

There are several concerns embedded in the recommendations. The main one is that implementing subsequent voted measures will create a potential risk that one/more of the subsequent levies are not supported by the residents. The recommendations are to continue going to voters for support. If the measures are not supported within two years of the recommended timeline, an adjustment is to be made in the anticipated staffing included in the original levy lid lift. The costs and revenues related to this initiative are anticipated to be tracked separately for several years to make sure appropriate budgetary decisions are made in the future.

In addition, there is a structural deficit inherent in the revenue system that funds local government services in Washington. Statutory limitations on property tax revenue that were enacted by statewide voted initiative ensure that over the long term, this new revenue will not keep pace with inflation. The inherent fiscal pressures of this reality are at play in the City's overall budget, which makes the foundation upon which this addition of police capacity difficult to sustain without the adoption of new, additional revenue sources. In any funding scenario, the City will continue to pursue state and federal grants for training, equipment and technology, to help offset the cost of any expenditure.

Further Conversation

The Police Community Advisory Committee will continue to meet in the coming months to hold the City accountable to commitments made in the levy process. Committee members will also play a vital role in helping to define further specific outcomes and impacts outlined above. While future meetings will be driven by committee member input, topics may include:

- Identifying priority organizations or groups that VPD should partner with
- Hosting collaborative conversations with community partners
- Studying approaches to community conflict resolution
- Helping inform how traffic cameras or other technology are implemented
- Discussing ways that VPD can act to support greater collaboration across the public safety ecosystem