



CITY OF ITHACA
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MAYOR'S OFFICE
LAURA A. LEWIS, MAYOR

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MEMORANDUM

To: Ithaca Police Department
From: Laura A. Lewis, Mayor
Date: April 7, 2023
Re: Update on Initiatives to Support IPD

I wish to express my sincere gratitude for the hard work you are continuing to do each day despite the many challenges facing your department. I am aware that the combination of diminished staffing levels, recruitment challenges, and lingering questions about the Chief and the future of the department have put an extra burden on your shoulders. I acknowledge that your mental and physical well-being has been tested of late and that you are looking to City Hall for support and action.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on what we have been working on to address the many ongoing challenges facing the department. Here is a breakdown of some initiatives and their current status:

Reimagining Public Safety; Special Common Council Committee:

- At the April 5 Common Council meeting, council adopted a report from the Special Committee on Public Safety that is the final step in determining what actions the City will take to implement Recommendation 1 from the original reimagining plan. These are the key points from that report:
 - **Action 1: Establish Deputy Chief of Staff for Public Safety** - I intend to appoint an interim in this position as soon as possible.
 - **Action 2: Develop a Public Safety Co-Response Team** – The Deputy Chief of Staff will work in partnership with the Police Chief and the Chief of Staff to implement this new team appropriately.
 - **Action 3: Maintain and support progressive change in the Ithaca Police Department** – the first passage of this section reads:

“The Ithaca Police Department will continue to be named the Ithaca Police Department and will continue to be a City department led by a Chief of Police with full authority over the department. Ithaca Police Officers will continue to be called police officers and will not lose their jobs or their rank.”
- The full report will be provided to you separately. Thank you to George McGonigal chairing the committee.

Recruitment of New Staff:

- We will be renewing a contract with DH Goodall, LLC, to continue a robust recruitment strategy and an active presence on social media. This work includes the management of a landing page, candidate recruitment tracking, email campaigns, and data collection and analysis of recruitment efforts.
- We will be working with a company to create a professionally scripted commercial that can be used for ongoing recruitment efforts, shared on social media channels, in emails to potential hires, and on the recruitment landing pages.
- We will be participating in regional job fairs promoting policing as a career choice.

- We have made offers to 8 candidates since December of 2022 which resulted in 2 currently continuing in the Academy.
- Funding for 6 vacancies remains, and funding for 7 more was deferred until December of 2023; however, should successful candidates be recruited, Common Council would authorize the funding to be released sooner.

Police Chief Search:

- We have contracted with Public Sector Consulting to conduct a national search for a Police Chief. You can read more about their approach here: <https://publicsectorsearch.com/about-us/>
- The consultant has conducted several focus groups to learn what the department and community are looking for in a Police Chief. You can watch the focus group with Common Council here: <https://www.youtube.com/live/IhfqzZfours?feature=share>
- We expect the search process to be complete in approximately 4 months.
- The Police Chief Exam was not canceled, it was postponed to allow for the consultant to recruit from a broader network and not be limited exclusively to an active civil service list. All candidates who had signed up for the exam were referred to the consultant so that they can be included in the process.

Officer Wellness:

- On March 14, 2023, Acting Chief Joly rolled out an officer wellness pilot program to provide opportunities for staff, including civilian staff, to take advantage of a local gym for workouts and wellness sessions.
- Thanks to Sgt. Meskill who has coordinated the access to the gym and managing the program. We are encouraged to hear that many of you have been taking advantage of the program.

New Public Safety Facility:

- The Common Council has authorized funding for land acquisition for a new Public Safety facility. The City is working on acquisition of a 2-acre site.
- The new facility will be approximately 40,000 sq. ft. in size, about double the existing building.
- The total project cost is currently estimated at \$20 million.

New Technology Grant Applications:

- The City has submitted a request for approximately \$1 million in federal earmark funds to cover the purchase of new technology for the department including radios for vehicles, portable radios, license plate readers, and an extension of the Commons Security Cameras system to include most of State Street.
- Thank you to Sgt. Cowan for assisting with the grant application.

Labor Negotiations

- A newly reconstituted City labor negotiations team (including labor relations specialist Jim Roemer, Chief of Staff Deb Mohlenhoff, Controller Steve Thayer, and HR Director Schelley Michell-Nunn) met with the PBA on April 5.
- The first meeting was productive and early strategies to address recruitment issues were discussed.
- The next labor negotiations meeting is set for May 10.

I am committed to working collaboratively with your department as we make strides this year. I will be scheduling an opportunity for us to meet in the near future so that I can hear from you directly and address any additional concerns. In the meantime, do not hesitate to reach out to me personally.

Thank you for the work you do for our City.