



**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Council Member Conor McCarthy  
**COPY:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager; Tadd Wille, Deputy City Manager; Katie Johnston, Budget Officer  
**SUBJECT:** **Resolution – Police Staffing Studies and Tacoma Police Department Staffing Decisions – November 24, 2020**  
**DATE:** 11/10/2020

---

**SUMMARY & PURPOSE:**

A resolution directing the City Manager to take into account the recommendations in the 2020 Comprehensive Police Staffing Study and upcoming Divertible Calls for Service Study when making staffing decisions for the Tacoma Police Department.

**COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Council Member Conor McCarthy

**BACKGROUND:**

**This Council Member’s Recommendation is Based On:**

In the early part of 2020, the City of Tacoma commissioned a Comprehensive Police Staffing Study to provide an independent and objective assessment of the Tacoma Police Department’s staffing needs. The City contracted with Matrix Consulting. A report was distributed to the Tacoma City Council on May 25, 2020.

The scope of the study was comprehensive, with a focus on each function within the Tacoma Police Department. The objectives of the study was to analyze and provide recommendations as follows:

- **Current operations and services** for all functions within the Police Department, including analysis of workloads, service levels, staffing, scheduling, and deployment.
- **Comparison of current services and service levels** to identify areas of improvement needed to achieve efficiencies.
- **Current staffing needs** for all functions to handle law enforcement workloads in the City based on a factual assessment of all operations.
- **Operations management**, examining current management techniques, and identify opportunities for improvement based on best practices in policing. Impacts on the collective bargaining environment were also identified, where appropriate.

The City of Tacoma is in the process of scoping an Alternative Response Study. This study will be designed to provide analysis and recommendations on the feasibility of alternative response to selected calls for service traditionally handled by police officers which could be handled by civilian responders. This study should be completed within the first quarter of 2021.

The Alternative Response Study will examine the incidents which have involved police response and, working with the community and the department evaluate the potential for alternative forms of response to roles involving:

- Mental health crises
- Homelessness
- Other forms of crisis response
- Non-emergency, low risk community requests for service.



An examination of these potential alternatives may find that many of these situations will continue to require police officer response, either alone or in conjunction with other service providers (governmental or not-for-profit).

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

Council Members have heard from constituents requesting the City staff the Tacoma Police Department sufficiently to respond to calls for service and to accomplish other key functions.

The proposed Tacoma Alternative Response Study scope includes several methods of engagement:

- Holding a series of community and stakeholder meetings
- Utilizing a survey for Police Department employees

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility:**

The Comprehensive Police Staffing Study was conducted to provide clarity to the City about the gaps in Policing services to the community as a whole. The Alternative Response Staffing Study will explore alternative staffing options while still working to close the gaps in the City’s public safety response. As an around-the-clock public safety operation, it has tacitly fallen on the police to address many of the problems in society which may be addressed in other, more appropriate, ways.

**Livability:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Presumably your recommendation is not the only potential course of action; please discuss other alternatives actions for council or staff to take. Please use table below.

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
1. No resolution	Maximum flexibility	May not incorporate valuable learnings from studies

**EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP:**

Continue regular Police Department staffing updates to the Tacoma City Council.

**COUNCIL MEMBER RECOMMENDATION:**

Pass this resolution which directs the City Manager to take into account the recommendations in the 2020 Comprehensive Police Staffing Study and upcoming Divertible Calls for Service Study when making staffing decisions for the Tacoma Police Department.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

No fiscal impact.