

Police Staffing: Patrol and Criminal Investigations

Evaluating current police staffing and patrol models to develop recommendations for effective alternative approaches to crime deterrence while reducing the negative impact of patrol and criminal investigation procedures on vulnerable communities.

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Background & Context

1. Lake patrol should be handled by EMS.

Why: Austin Police Department Lake Patrol enforces state laws and city ordinances on 28 miles of Austin waterways, along with Travis County Sheriff's Office Lake Patrol, LCRA Rangers, and Texas Parks and Wildlife. APD operates 7 boats with 10 FTE's at a cost of \$1.4M. Duties include "talking with people about safety, picking up fatigued swimmers, helping stranded boaters, watching for reckless drivers, supporting the APD dive team in search and rescue, and underwater evidence recovery, [and] pulling dangerous debris like submerged tree limbs out of the water." The most common complaint handled by APD Lake Patrol is noise. Since so much of APD's work is related to saving lives rather than addressing criminality, and several other police agencies have concurrent jurisdiction, we recommend that APD presence at the lake be eliminated in favor of an allocation of \$1.4M to EMS, adding 5 additional EMS FTE's (1 Captain and 4 Clinical Specialists) along with the purchase and outfitting of two ambulance boats capable of providing Advanced Life Support care on the water.

Workgroup Members In Support: Jessica Johnson, Amanda Lewis, Kathy Mitchell, Chas Moore

2. The use of police dogs should be discontinued.

Why: A review of Austin dog bite cases from 2015 to 2019 has yielded the following information:

- Dog bite incidents primarily involve Hispanic and Black men.
- It is likely that some incidents have involved children.
- In only 2 of 55 cases did the bitten person have a gun.
- 35% of cases appear to involve no crime at all.
- Every person attacked by a dog will “evade” or “resist” and most did. Some garnered serious additional criminal charges related to resisting.

Force incidents involving K9 bites should be eliminated by eliminating the use of dogs to stop or find a fleeing suspect. According to the APD website, “Typically the K9 teams are used to locate suspects who have fled the scene of a crime.” At minimum, the practice of training dogs to bite people should be abolished and existing units created to use dogs against people should be disbanded. Any K9 trained to attack a human being should be retired to a good home.

Workgroup Members In Support: Jessica Johnson, Amanda Lewis, Kathy Mitchell, Chas Moore, Sue Gabriel

3. The use of police horses should be discontinued.

Why: Many other cities such as Baltimore, Washington D.C., Boston, Tulsa, Las Vegas, Kansas City, and Saint Paul have disbanded their mounted units. The mounted patrol performs ceremonial duties and crowd control downtown. Crowd control can be handled in a variety of ways without horses. The mounted unit should be eliminated and the horses moved to good homes because the ceremonial purpose is not sufficient to the continued expense. The horses are very expensive to maintain and after nearly a decade APD has not been able to build the needed stables with the money approved by voters. Officers in the mounted unit have already been migrated to patrol, and should be permanently reassigned.

Workgroup Members In Support: Jessica Johnson, Amanda Lewis, Kathy Mitchell, Chas Moore, Sue Gabriel

4. APD should discontinue the use of officer self-initiated calls.

Why: Criminal investigation as practiced by patrol officers in self-initiated calls appear from the available data to rarely result in a report, let alone an arrest for a crime. These

same self-initiated stops represent 35% of “call” volume, take longer than other kinds of calls, and sometimes result in force incidents. Non-traffic self initiated calls should also be eliminated and that officer time allocated back to 911 call response as needed, or eligible officers can be moved to criminal investigation units with more structure for the pursuit of actionable information about crimes.

Workgroup Members In Support: Jessica Johnson, Amanda Lewis, Kathy Mitchell, Chas Moore, Sue Gabriel

5. There should be a community full-curriculum review of the cadet academy.

Why: Police are supposed to protect and serve the community, but according to numerous reports commissioned by the city, APD has been trained as if officers are in a war zone and any civilian could be an attacker. Changing the “us vs. them” mindset into a mindset of community service, with a guardian role as part of that service, but to effectively include other service roles that police are called to fulfill, will only occur with significant change to the curriculum. APD has consistently attempted to minimize the degree of change needed, and attempted to corral the change to a handful of courses. According to a Kroll memo from February of this year, not long before the vote to restart the Academy, “interviews of Academy supervisors and instructors suggests the paramilitary model continues to predominate.” (Kroll, Feb. 26, 2021, p. 5) Kroll further notes that APD leadership does not agree with key assessments from other reports related to paramilitary academies. As of February, instructors insisted that “cadets who have not experienced being physically assaulted or punched before arriving at the Academy should experience this,” and “were unable to provide a persuasive rationale as to why such an exercise could not reasonably occur towards the end of Academy after cadets have received all essential defensive tactics training.” (p. 6) To ensure that a new model is woven through the entire curriculum, the entire cadet curriculum and all teaching materials should be released to the public to foster transparency and create trust with the community.

Workgroup Members In Support: Jessica Johnson, Amanda Lewis, Kathy Mitchell, Chas Moore