



**City of Long Beach**

*Working Together to Serve*

**Office of Gerrie Schipske  
Councilwoman, Fifth District  
Memorandum**

Date: December 19, 2006

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District *Gerrie Schipske*

Subject: **Consideration of Establishment of Appropriate Staffing Levels for Police and Fire Departments**

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## DISCUSSION

### **POLICE**

Amending the Long Beach City Charter to require the City Council to establish a staffing ratio for police that is consistent with the City's population has been raised a number of times in recent years due to the frustration and concern of citizens regarding public safety.

While I presented this issue at a recent Charter Amendment Committee, I do not believe this Council and City can wait to address this important issue until a Charter Amendment is placed on the ballot, approved by the voters and enacted into law in light of the recent sexual assaults, shootings, robberies and hate crimes that have occurred recently in several parts of our City.

The number of police officers continues to be a major issue that has not been dealt with. Proposals have been bantered about in recent campaigns that support an increase of 100 to 300 more police. Following the elections, a budget was enacted without the addition of any new police officers. Later, the City Council was met with the news that a critical situation had developed with the announced departure of a dozen or more experience police officers due to the City's lack of longevity pay. The City Council approved a financial incentive package for the police officers to help stem the tide of departures.

Overlaying the issue of adding additional police officers is the fact that recruitment to law enforcement positions throughout the State is difficult. There are not enough men and women interested in law enforcement jobs. Therefore,

most, if not all, police departments in California are experiencing high vacancy rates which translate into lower staffing ratios per 1000 citizens.

**Staffing Ratios:** Continued violent crimes in Long Beach have grabbed headlines and raise the issue of whether or not Long Beach has an adequate ratio of public safety staff in relation to our growing population. There is no consensus on staffing levels for local police departments. The ratio of both officers and total police employees per 1000 is significantly related to crime rates. Crime rates are also related to crime prevention efforts that address conditions of poverty, drug dependency and which promote strong neighborhoods, job and educational opportunity and community design. Cities of the same population size may differ widely in staffing needs because of the differences in demographics, socio-economic characteristics, climate or other unique conditions.

According to the International City Management Association (ICMA), the Pacific Coast has lower police employee staffing levels at 2.32/1000 than all but one other region in the country. Staffing levels are often the product of political climate, finances, city leadership, crime, calls for service and community expectations.

An analysis of police departments with populations between 350,000 – 500,000 persons is included in the *Police Departments in Large Cities: 1990-2000*, as published by the United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Fifteen cities (including Long Beach). For these cities, the median total staffing rates per population were 2.76/1000 and for sworn staff the figure was 1.92/1000. The figures for the “average” were 3.20/1000 for total staff and 2.32 for “sworn” staff only. **Long Beach’s figures are: 2.95/1000 “total staff” per 1000; 1.91/1000 “sworn staff” (which places Long Beach tied for 8<sup>th</sup> out of 15 cities compared). It should also be noted that Long Beach only has 65% sworn staff compared with an average of 72% for other departments, making Long Beach the 13<sup>th</sup> lowest in percentage of sworn staff versus non-sworn and the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in a ratio of non-sworn per 1000 population: 1.04. (Average for all cities compared is: 0.84.)**

**Police Operating Budgets:** The City of North Las Vegas recently conducted a study of police operations for cities of comparable sizes – which included Long Beach. This study analyzed the “operating budgets” for police departments. The median budget per citizen amounts to \$210; the average, \$229. **Long Beach spends \$294 per citizen on police services (which is 4<sup>th</sup> highest out of 15 cities compared). It should be noted that the Long Beach budget includes**

**line items that are not directly related to the provision of police services such as debt service.**

***Comparison of Uniform Crime Reporting Index Offenses Per Capita and Police Staff Per Index Offenses:*** The same North Las Vegas study compared the crime indexes for cities of comparable sizes and an “offense per sworn staff” ratio for both violent and property crimes. The median index for number of violent crimes per 1000 residents was 11.0; 60.3 for property crimes. The average was 11.2 for violent crimes and 44.1 for property crimes. **Long Beach’s figures are: 7.0 violent crimes per 1000; 31.3 property crimes per 1000 (which is 3<sup>rd</sup> safest out of 15 cities compared for violent crime and the #1 safest out of 15 cities for property crimes).**

Offenses per sworn staff median figures for violent crime: 4.88; property crimes: 29.77. Offenses per sworn staff average figures for violent crimes: 4.84; property crimes: 27.92.

Long Beach’s figures for offenses per sworn staff for violent crimes: 3.65; property crimes: 16.40 **(which is 14<sup>th</sup> out of 15 cities compared).**

**Overview of City of Long Beach Police Staffing Compared with 14 Other Cities of Comparable Size:**

When compared to 14 other cities of comparable size, Long Beach:

- Spends more per citizen on police services than 11 other cities (\$294 per citizen versus an average of \$229 per citizen).
- Employs a higher ratio of non-sworn staff per citizen than 12 other cities (1.04 per 1000 versus an average of 0.84 per 1000).
- Staffs the total number of sworn police staff at a lower level than 7 other cities (1.91 per 1000 versus an average of 2.32 per 1000).
- Is safer than 12 other cities in terms of violent crimes per 1000 residents (7.0 per 1000 versus an average of 11.2 per 1000).
- Is the safest out of all cities in terms of property crimes per 1000 residents (31.3 per 1000 versus an average of 44.1 per 1000)

**The International Association of Chiefs of Police Perspective on Staffing Ratios:**

The International Association of Chiefs of Police strongly discourages the use of staffing to population ratios to determine whether or not a city has sufficient police:

“Ready-made, universally applicable patrol staffing standards do not exist. Ratios, such as officers-per-thousand population, are

totally inappropriate as a basis for staffing decisions. Accordingly, they have no place in the IACP methodology. Defining patrol staffing allocation and deployment requirements is a complex endeavor that requires consideration of an extensive series of factors and a sizable body of reliable, current data. In defining patrol staffing requirements, we consider the following factors, the mix of which is absolutely unique to each locality and agency:

- Policing philosophy
- Policing priorities
- Police policies and practices
- Number of calls for service
- Population size and density
- Composition of population, particularly age structure
- Stability and transience of population
- Cultural conditions
- Climate, especially seasonality
- Policies of prosecutorial, judicial, correctional, and probation agencies
- Citizen demands for crime control and non-crime control services
- Crime reporting practices of citizenry
- Municipal resources
- Trends in the foregoing areas.

To prescribe patrol requirements properly, a series of professional guidelines and departmental policy preferences must be explicitly considered and deliberately applied. These concern policing philosophy, service philosophy, response time standards, and supervision philosophy.”

## **Fire**

Long Beach, at 76.2 square miles including waterways, has 23 fire stations, or 3.3 square miles per fire station, and serves a population of 491,000. The City of San Francisco has 49 square miles with 42 fire stations, or 1.2 square miles per fire station, and serves a population of 791,600.

**Staffing:** A number of national organizations concerned with fire fighting including the National Fire Protection Association, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Insurance Services Office, International Cities Management Association and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International

publish staffing and response data which cities use as a guide for determining staffing, equipment and budget.

The International City Management Association indicates fire staffing data by population range and number of cities reporting in each population range. The per capita staffing listed in the ICMA Municipal Year Book, 2003 for **2002 staffing** indicates that 17 cities with population range of 250,000 to 500,000 have 1.42 sworn firefighters per 1000 residents.

The Long Beach Fire Department currently employs 134 on-duty staff. Total Department staff sworn and non-sworn: 586.

**Budget:** Long Beach Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) budgeted expenditures are at \$257 and \$236 per capita for San Francisco and Oakland respectively. Long Beach budgeted expenditures are at \$160 per capita. (As Stated in the City of Long Beach FY 2007 Budget)

***Serious Issues Facing the Long Beach Fire Department:***

In 2002, the City of Long Beach retained the consultant services of Tri-Data and Public Financial Management to review the operations of the Long Beach Fire Department at a cost to the City of over \$170,000. This study produced 126 "recommendations" and 15 "initiatives."

Significant findings of the study indicate that the calls for service demand on the Department are increasing at a rapid growth rate, especially in the number of calls for medical services. Additionally, the study concluded that the response time of the Department indicated "call processing and turnout need improvement." The study showed that in FY 02-03 the average for response time was 06:25 for all calls; 09:25 for 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. The National Fire Protection Association Standard 1710 – Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments sets initial arrival of deployed engine company within 4 minutes and/or the initial full alarm assignment within an 8 minute response time to 90% of all incidents.

The study also outlined the critical need for replacement/refurbishing of several fire stations

**To date, the City Council has not acted upon the recommendations related to response time and the condition of the fire station facilities.**

POLICY ISSUE

Should the City Council establish appropriate staffing levels for public safety personnel and funding for staffing and equipment that is consistent with a number of factors, including but not limited to the City's population?

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council request that the City Council Public Safety Committee review a proposal and to report back to the full City Council within 60 days, to establish by ordinance a Public Safety Commission comprised of the Mayor, the Council, the City Manager, the Chief of Police, the Fire Chief and the City Prosecutor that shall establish appropriate levels of public safety staffing consistent with the City's population, public safety priorities, police and fire policies and practices, numbers of calls for service, response times, uniform crime reporting data, population size and density, demographics of population, citizen demands for services, municipal resources, surrounding jurisdiction crime statistics and data from the National Fire Protection Association, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Insurance Services Office, International Cities Management Association and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

The Commission shall report its findings and the City Council shall adjust budgeting for public safety staffing accordingly.

Nothing would preclude the Mayor and City Council from convening this Commission more than once every five years.