

TO: Dr. Langer

FROM: Nick Etminan, Jim Greenwood, Alaina Murphy, Misty Odom, and Marcus Peters

SUBJECT: Police Department Budget Reallocation

DATE: October 12th, 2023

CASE TITLE: Advocating for an Increase in Police Department Budget to Address Critical Issues

RECOMMENDATION(S) FOR ACTION:

In light of the proposal to reduce the police department budget by 25% and reallocate these funds, we recommend against such a substantial reduction in police funding. Instead, we should advocate for an increase in the police department budget to support the implementation of new programs. This approach ensures a balanced approach to community well-being and public safety.

BACKGROUND:

The River Forest Village Board of Trustees is currently considering a significant reduction in the police department budget by 25%. In Spring 2020, local protests emerged across the country centered on reducing violent police encounters. The protests, ultimately, began the conversation of police reform through a reallocation of funds from the police department to invest in social services to help those with mental-health issues. The River Forest Village Board of Trustees has an agenda item scheduled for discussion and vote at the September 25, 2023 meeting. The proposed item is to reduce the police department budget by 25%, and to reallocate those funds to social service departments and agencies in the community.

ANALYSIS:

Issue 1: Addressing the Local Mental Health Crisis

The Village Board needs to recognize the urgent need to address the global mental health crisis at the local level. To effectively respond to mental illness, drug addiction, and noncriminal behaviors, additional funding for social service providers and agencies is imperative. One viable solution is the adoption of a co-responder model, where police collaborate directly with mental health service providers to assist community members in crisis. ¹ This collaborative approach, along with enhanced cooperation among police, mental health service providers, and other stakeholders, can fulfill the Village Board's objectives without imposing significant extra costs. The challenge of reallocating funds from police budgets is also noteworthy due to the substantial portion allocated to salaries, pensions, and benefits for officers. ² This necessitates a careful examination of the police force size and the value of diversity in the community before making decisions. Contractual issues with police unions further complicate reform efforts, as unions often resist changes that could affect officer salaries and pensions. Additionally, the public's opinion is crucial in shaping budget reform decisions, with an overwhelming 83% supporting police reform. ³ Effective budget reallocation should align with public values and prioritize necessary police services while eliminating ineffective programs like School Resource Officers (SROs) to enhance community well-being [\(Appendix A\)](#)

Issue 2: Reducing Violent Police Encounters Through Training and Intervention

Minimizing violent encounters between police and community members is essential. Providing officers with enhanced de-escalation training and intervention resources is a crucial step. Professionalizing the police through improved training and performance standards can significantly reduce use-of-force incidents. Adequate funding ensures that law enforcement agencies can effectively carry out crime-fighting strategies. ⁴ Proper hiring and training practices can prevent escalations and misconduct.

The high prevalence of interactions with individuals with mental illness underscores the need for comprehensive mental health response training, including Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training.⁵ CIT-trained officers are better equipped to handle crisis situations effectively. Moreover, role-playing training for police officers can enhance interactions with individuals with mental illness. Balancing police training to align with the predominantly conversational nature of interactions with civilians is important to prevent escalations⁶ ([Appendix B](#))

Issue 3: Maintaining or Increasing Police Officer Staffing Levels

Safeguarding staffing levels of police officers is crucial to address rising criminal activity and service calls. The recruitment and retention of officers have become challenging, partly due to negative perceptions of law enforcement.⁷ Reduced police budgets have resulted in a surge in violent crimes in various cities. Lower morale among officers has led to a wave of resignations and retirements.⁸ The public safety of communities benefits from investing in officer staffing, allowing for strategies focused on quality arrests of violent offenders. Positive community support and proper funding are vital to maintain officer morale and recruitment efforts.⁹ A significant portion of police department budgets goes towards staffing, and inadequate staffing levels can hinder department functionality. While exploring alternative approaches like contracted 911 response, there is insufficient data to support its effectiveness in addressing social injustices. Research indicates a correlation between defunding the police and rising crime rates, highlighting the need for comprehensive reform rather than budget reallocation alone.¹⁰ ([Appendix C](#))

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION(S) FOR ACTION:

In conclusion, we recommend advocating for an increase in the police department budget to address the critical issues identified by the Village Board. This approach will allow us to allocate resources to combat the global mental health crisis, enhance officer training, and maintain or increase staffing levels.

By investing in our police department, we can better serve our community by providing essential mental health services, reducing violent encounters, and ensuring that we have enough officers to respond to increasing demands for public safety. This balanced approach prioritizes the well-being of our community and the safety of our residents.

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Endnotes

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