



CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



Bureau of Police
Ted Wheeler, Mayor
Charles Lovell, Chief of Police

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September 24, 2021

Citizens Review Committee
1221 SW 4th Ave. Room 140
Portland, OR 97204

Thank you to the members of the Citizen Review Committee's Crowd Control and Use of Force workgroup (CCUFWG) for your recent report focusing on PPB response to demonstrations and civil unrest in 2020. It is clear the workgroup spent significant time and effort on gathering feedback to compile this report and its recommendations.

Following the murder of George Floyd, our city saw more than 170 days of crowd control events. Many events included thousands of people and were peaceful, requiring no police presence. However, unfortunately many others included civil unrest in varying degrees. The events of 2020 are complex and the Bureau was challenged by a number of factors, including the frequency of events, the complexity of tactics used by participants and decreased staffing, which contributed to fatigue and increased call response times. Many roles in the Incident Management Team were filled by the same personnel, due to a shortage of trained personnel. I am proud of the sacrifices made by many of our Bureau members to ensure the very worst didn't occur; many of these nights could have resulted in a mass casualty event.

I want to acknowledge the impact to our Bureau members. They are human beings who were subjected to almost nightly events where dangerous objects were thrown at them. Every precinct was lit on fire or was damaged. Bureau personnel were injured and many were threatened as they arrived and departed from their shifts.

Much has already changed since 2020. First a clarification that Bureau personnel wear protective gear underneath their clothing—it is imperative we protect our employees physically. Helmets are required when there is civil unrest—once again as protection. Last year, officers should have had eye gear, due to the lasers that were being pointed at them. They are also in need of hearing protection devices.

Also, officers were asked to wear a personal identification number in lieu of a name tag due to concerns and threats about doxing to them and their families. Members of the public reported it was difficult to see or recall the personal identification number of officers during often dark and dynamic crowd management situations. Therefore, the Bureau shifted to begin embroidering officers' names or 3-digit number on their uniforms in a larger, easily seen font. The 3-digit number is also on protective helmets.

This nightly civil unrest also had unforeseen stresses on many systems in PPB to include the documentation, review and analysis of force events specifically related to crowd management. The Bureau is working on making modifications to systems to be able to handle data more efficiently.

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In regard to training, I am extremely proud of the work of our Equity and Inclusion Office. All officers have been trained on implicit bias, and the Bureau's Equity team continues to develop trainings to increase awareness of equity issue and decrease bias in policing.

All sworn personnel are currently going through crowd control training to ensure all the directives, laws and TROS are clarified. In this training, we are talking about ways we can improve in regard to how we respond to crowd control.

Crowd control is always evolving, as new and safer techniques and tools are developed. In addition, there are changes and updates on legal issues. Recently, we asked the City Attorney to seek a higher opinion regarding the ramifications behind HB 2928 in regard to crowd control.

It is impossible to discuss the future of crowd control events without talking about staffing. Since July 2020, we have lost 150 sworn members and the members of the Rapid Response Team have resigned from their volunteer positions. With our lean staffing, we must ensure we have enough resources to answer 911 emergency calls for service during crowd events. We continue to try to find a balance of response to ensure people can safely assert their First Amendment rights at events, but also address those engaged in violence as soon and as safely as possible.

Thank you again for the considerable time and effort to address this topic.

Sincerely,



CHARLES LOVELL III
Chief of Police

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