

Wilmington, Delaware
April 4, 2024

#xxxx

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Darby**

WHEREAS, a growing body of research suggests that our nation’s public safety systems are underequipped with the social and community resources to protect and serve citizens effectively. The current demands on our public safety infrastructure extend beyond the protection of lives and property. Reduction of crime incidences through violence prevention, providing citizens a voice in law enforcement policy and procedure, and maintaining an environment of fairness and inclusivity for both the public and first responders have all become imperative to the efficient functioning of our City; and

WHEREAS, the management of the complex public safety needs of Wilmingtonians requires a strategic, versatile public safety infrastructure with a dedicated Director of Public Safety to oversee the coordination of its various components, including, but not limited to the Wilmington Fire Department (“WFD” or “Fire Department”), Wilmington Police Department (“WPD” or “Police Department”), Office of Emergency Management, the Citizens Review Board, Police Advisory Board, and the newly proposed Office of Violence Prevention. The roles of public safety directors vary across municipalities; however, they share a common responsibility for managing peripheral policy matters so that subordinate organizations can focus on their core duties; and

WHEREAS, a public safety director would positively impact our City’s capacity to consistently address essential personnel and community engagement matters within the WFD and WPD, such as overseeing the process of recruiting and retaining highly-qualified, diverse talent among the ranks of our first responders; developing evidence-based strategies for maintaining an inclusive internal culture for first responders; providing a safe space for

personnel to make complaints; participating in the review of promotion and disciplinary matters; collaborating with a proposed diversity and race relations director; administering the policies necessary to ensure that our public safety infrastructure is continually evolving in response to the needs of Wilmington's communities; engaging our residents in conversations surrounding how best to secure our neighborhoods; and implementing community trust surveys to evaluate the performance of our public safety mechanisms; and

WHEREAS, administering audits and assessments of critical City services in consultation with external technical experts is an essential element of bolstering critical public safety infrastructure. The Center for Public Safety Excellence's ("CPSE") Commission on Fire Accreditation International ("CFAI") provides a comprehensive evaluation framework for ensuring that the quality of our fire services adheres to industry standards. The CFAI is a voluntary accreditation that demonstrates to the community that a fire department continually self-assesses, looks for opportunities for improvement, is transparent, and holds itself accountable through third-party verification and validation. The CFAI process is thorough, typically requiring three (3) to five (5) years to complete. Approximately 293 fire agencies are currently CFAI-accredited nationwide; and

WHEREAS, retention of fire professionals is a nationwide concern, to the extent that it was identified as a key priority by the Department of Homeland Security. Having a dedicated recruitment and retention professional will enable the WFD to not only pinpoint exceptional individuals with the skills for today's fire emergency needs but also to prepare for future demands of the work. Designating the WFD recruiter role as a mid-level officer position demonstrates a commitment to addressing hiring challenges. The estimated costs of having an individual in the WFD dedicated to recruiting include the FTE (full-time equivalent) salary of

\$65,000 to \$75,000, an additional \$20,000 for benefits, \$3,000 for professional development, and miscellaneous expenses associated with traveling to local and regional career fair events to engage with potential candidates for WFD positions; and

WHEREAS, the WPD is just one element of Wilmington’s public safety infrastructure, however, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, their budget grew by \$2,273,043, a 4.4 percent increase, and by 8.14 percent within five years. This resolution recommends that greater funding priority be placed on improving homicide clearance rates and better integration of community policing approaches for low-risk public safety activities; and

WHEREAS, this resolution recommends that the WPD undertake a third-party audit every four years to assess operations and allow time for the City Administration and Council to work collaboratively with the Police Department to address findings and recommendations emanating from the audit; and

WHEREAS, as one of the most prominent components of the City’s public safety infrastructure, the WPD still has a significant role to play in making a community-driven security strategy a reality. Actions, like placing the financial responsibility for the Citizens Review Board and a periodic external audit under the scope of the WPD budget appropriations, as opposed to the purview of the Mayor’s Office, would demonstrate the Department’s commitment to a more inclusive vision; and

WHEREAS, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding has given the City a rare opportunity to address some of the root causes of crime, however, the short-term economic support it provides is insufficient to fully resolve the long-standing concerns neighborhoods are experiencing. The City of Wilmington has not experienced sufficient decreases in crime to justify continual cost increases in the WPD budget. This resolution proposes a graduated

reallocation of 1% of the WPD budget per fiscal year, beginning in FY 2025, to alternative public safety measures, including the establishment of an Office of Violence Prevention, until a total recurring reallocation of 5% is reached in FY 2030. A further reallocation of an amount equal to 5% of the WPD budget every year thereafter will ensure that our efforts to maintain a holistic public safety infrastructure will be sustainable for this and future generations; and

WHEREAS, leveraging financial support from the Tax Stabilization Fund or Unassigned Fund Balance would allow the City to make the appropriate investment in restructuring the public safety infrastructure to meet the current needs of Wilmingtonians; and

WHEREAS, community trauma and mental health crises are a pressing concern. This resolution requests that our City's Administration provide the necessary support to assess Wilmington's community response needs. It further recommends the issuance of an RFP (request for proposal) to procure the services of independent community response team experts who can conduct the necessary analysis to advise on appropriate public safety strategies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that this Legislative body is in support of a restructured public safety infrastructure that is coordinated and led by a Director of Public Safety. The responsibilities of the Director would include oversight of administrative matters pertaining to the Wilmington Fire Department ("WFD" or "Fire Department"), Wilmington Police Department ("WPD" or "Police Department"), Office of Emergency Management, the Citizens Review Board, Police Advisory Board, and the newly proposed Office of Violence Prevention.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Council urges the Administration to make the necessary financial provisions, in a timely manner, by redirecting 1% of the WPD budget over

five consecutive years until a 5% allocation is reached and sustained thereafter to support the establishment of an Office of Violence Prevention.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Council encourages the Administration to work in partnership with the Police Department and Fire Department to ensure that first responders continually implement accreditation processes, conduct third-party audits, and community assessments to ensure their compliance with current professional standards and the distinct public safety needs of the City of Wilmington.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: This Resolution supports the implementation of a restructured, evidence-based public safety infrastructure, led by a Public Safety Director. The responsibilities of the Director would include oversight of administrative matters pertaining to the Wilmington Fire Department (“WFD” or “Fire Department”), Wilmington Police Department (“WPD” or “Police Department”), Office of Emergency Management, the Citizens Review Board, Police Advisory Board, and the newly proposed Office of Violence Prevention, as well as playing a role in ensuring that appropriate accreditation processes, third-party audits, and community assessments are conducted on a regular basis. This Resolution also urges the Administration to make financial provisions to support a proposed Office of Violence Prevention.