

Wilmington, Delaware
April 3, 2025

#0037

Sponsor:

**Council
Member
Spadola**

WHEREAS, the Wilmington City Council 2022-2025 Strategic Plan prioritizes a “Safe and Secure Wilmington.” The City of Wilmington is committed to providing the highest level of public safety through a well-staffed, well-equipped, and well-trained police force; and

WHEREAS, the Wilmington Police Department (WPD) has faced challenges related to officer retention and recruitment, reflecting a national trend of declining interest in law enforcement careers. As of February 10, 2025, WPD was approximately 26 officers below authorized strength; and

WHEREAS, since 2017, Council has approved the commencement of seven Police Academy Classes by resolution when WPD manpower has fallen below 95 percent of the authorized strength. In 2019, the 99th Wilmington Police Academy reported 32 graduates out of 175 applicants. In the 100th Police Academy, which was held in 2020, 19 of 131 candidates accepted employment offers. The 101st Police Academy graduated 13 of 102 candidates. In the 102nd Police Academy, seven of 51 applicants were offered positions with WPD, and in the most recent class, six of 77 recruits joined the WPD; and

WHEREAS, the City seeks to implement innovative strategies to attract and retain highly qualified officers to meet public safety objectives. Among the reasons candidates cited for withdrawing from the application process, accepting employment with other police departments has been a recurring response. An expanded take-home vehicle program has been identified as a potential benefit that could enhance officer satisfaction, improve retention, and serve as a valuable recruitment tool by offering a tangible incentive to both current and prospective officers; and

WHEREAS, Delaware State Police, New Castle County Police, and numerous neighboring municipalities offer some form of take-home vehicle program. Take-home vehicle programs in other jurisdictions have demonstrated additional benefits, including increased police visibility in neighborhoods, faster response times when off-duty officers are called to emergencies, and improved vehicle maintenance and accountability due to individual officer responsibility for assigned vehicles; and

WHEREAS, as of Fiscal Year 2022, approximately 56 WPD officers participated in the take-home vehicle program; and

WHEREAS, an analysis is necessary to evaluate the financial and operational feasibility of expanding eligibility for the program, including but not limited to, the costs associated with vehicle acquisition, maintenance, insurance, fuel, and the potential long-term savings from less frequent need for police academies, reduced attrition, and hiring expenses.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON that the City Council hereby requests that the Administration, in coordination with the Wilmington Police Department (WPD), conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis to assess the viability of expanding eligibility for the take-home vehicle program for WPD officers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the analysis should include, but not be limited to, the following components: retention and recruitment benefits, with an assessment of how an expanded take-home program could improve officer retention rates and serve as an incentive in recruitment efforts, including comparisons to other jurisdictions where similar programs have been successful; cost analysis, with a detailed breakdown of the program's anticipated marginal costs, including vehicle procurement, maintenance, fuel, insurance, and

administrative oversight; potential savings, with evaluation of potential savings from improved retention, reduced overtime related to quicker response times, and lower recruitment and training expenses due to decreased turnover; operational and logistical considerations, review of the impact on vehicle availability for active duty, maintenance schedules, and guidelines for off-duty use; and community impact, with exploration of how increased police visibility and faster emergency response times could benefit Wilmington neighborhoods and overall public safety.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Administration is requested to present its findings and recommendations to the City Council within a reasonable timeframe, not to exceed six (6) months from the passage of this Resolution.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: The Wilmington City Council 2022-2025 Strategic Plan prioritizes a “Safe and Secure Wilmington.” The Wilmington Police Department (WPD) has faced challenges related to officer retention and recruitment, reflecting a national trend of declining interest in law enforcement careers. As of February 10, 2025, WPD was approximately 26 officers below authorized strength. This Resolution requests that the Administration, in coordination with the Wilmington Police Department (WPD), conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis to assess the viability of expanding eligibility for the WPD’s take-home vehicle program and present findings and recommendations to the City Council within six months of the passage of this Resolution.