

March 20, 2017

Councilperson \_\_\_\_\_  
200 W. Washington St.  
Phoenix, AZ 85003

Dear Councilperson \_\_\_\_\_

You oversee a police department that is in a manpower and staffing crisis.

Over the last two months, the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association has attended public safety subcommittee meetings and met with each councilperson individually to discuss, in depth, our concerns with the staffing crisis on the Phoenix Police Department.

During these meetings, only one councilperson had the fortitude to affirmatively state that the current police department staffing crisis was the fault of the City Council. All others listened, and most were completely noncommittal.

**Simply put, we do not have enough police officers to keep the residents of this city safe in the way that they deserve in return for their hard-earned tax dollars.**

#### **How Did We Get Here?**

- This crisis occurred because the Mayor, Council, and City Manager made a conscious decision to balance the budget on the backs of rank and file cops by not hiring for over six years, not even for attrition.
- This decision left the police department dangerously understaffed causing numerous manpower shuffles (re-bids) to occur. The latest one occurred February 20<sup>th</sup>.
- This is the equivalent of putting a band-aid on a gunshot wound.

#### **What is the Impact?**

##### **Impact to Citizens:**

- Citizens have been kept in the dark as to the true nature and severity of the problem.
- They are not getting adequate and timely police services commensurate with living in the sixth largest city in the nation
- **They are subject to response times on Priority One (emergency) calls that are now averaging 7 minutes. Some officers have reported instances of 15-20-minute response times on emergency calls.**

##### **Impact to Patrol:**

- Officers are continuously disrupted by numerous reorganizations of departmental manpower.
- Squads remain dangerously short-staffed.
- Officers face ongoing safety issues, including responding to calls without backup or having to wait an inordinately long time for backup.
- Manpower shortages result in squads, and in some instances entire shifts, being held over to handle call volume.

- Supervisors are being forced to borrow manpower from adjacent precincts on a daily basis.
- Patrol shifts are ill-equipped to handle large and/or dangerous crimes/crime scenes due to low manpower.
- **At our peak, we had 140 traffic enforcement motor officers; we now have between 35 and 40 (72% reduction)**
- Response times are at an all-time unacceptable high.

### **Impact to Detective Bureaus:**

- Detective bureaus have been gradually whittled away with the expectation of doing more with less.
- This leaves detectives unable to keep up with an ever-increasing caseload.
  - **At our peak, there were over 60 property crimes detectives. Now we have slightly over 30.**
- By stripping detectives out of their details to man the front lines in patrol, more reports are being generated only to now be sent to severely understaffed detective details.
- Understaffed detective details mean cases cannot be processed in a timely manner, which can often-times result in cases being unprosecutable due to exceeding the statute of limitations.
- This creates a domino effect where victims' rights can be compromised, creating a disservice to the public.
- This leaves the Department and the City open to increased liability due to detectives not being able to keep up with case load.

### **Reasonable Staffing Level**

PLEA believes a city our size needs to be staffed to at least to a level of 2.5 officers per 1000 citizens. Phoenix currently staffs at 1.7:1000. This figure is based on a 2003 study done by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) as well as current census data on population levels and police staffing of the 10 largest cities in the US. The average police staffing among the top 10 cities (Phoenix is ranked no. 6) is 2.5 officers per 1000.

### **Why the Need for 2.5 Officers per 1000 Citizens?**

- Most citizens don't realize just how large the City of Phoenix is.
- The ratio of 2.5:1000 is an average meaning many cities staff much higher.
- Phoenix encompasses 530 square miles. Our northern boundary is the community of Anthem. Our southern boundary is the Gila Indian reservation. To the west, we run out to cities of Tolleson and Goodyear, and we go as far east as the borders of Scottsdale and Tempe.
- It currently takes about one hour for one of our police helicopters to fly the perimeter of the city at normal cruise speed.
- The website growthnation.com forecasts Phoenix will be the fourth largest city by 2020 and the US Census Bureau estimates that by 2030 the population of Phoenix will be 2.2 million. Current population is 1.56 million
- Per 2010 census data, the population of the Phoenix community of Ahwatukee is 77,000; yet on any given day it is serviced by only three Phoenix police officers.
- The same census data puts the population of the city of Prescott at 40,000. That community is serviced by a police department comprised of 65 sworn officers.
- Based on geographic size, the city of San Francisco (47.9 sq mi.) could easily fit inside the Maryvale precinct (75.8 sq mi.).
- To have enough personnel to protect and serve our growing number of residents, businesses, winter visitors, and tourism.
- We cannot effectively handle multiple chaotic crime scenes at the same time under current staffing.

- It would be impossible to effectively handle a 9-11 type event or a coordinated terrorist attack hitting multiple locations in the city simultaneously.

As you are aware, under the ordinance, Council is responsible for securing the funds to run the city whether by assessing fees or levying taxes. Unfortunately, City Manager Ed Zuercher believes an end goal of 3125 officers is adequate simply because “it’s what we can afford.” This not only falls far short of 4,000. It is also 263 short of our 2008 staffing level of 3,388 officers.

Our officers, who work to keep the citizens safe, cannot be expected to continue to sacrifice their personal safety with the standard expectation of doing more with less. The city cannot continue to count on luck as a partner. In addition, the citizens we serve deserve consistent, reliable, and TIMELY police services that can only be delivered with proper staffing levels. City politicians are fond of boasting that Phoenix is the sixth largest city in the nation. It’s time our citizens receive police services commensurate with living in the sixth largest city.

**We are now requesting a commitment from your office to take a leadership role to secure the necessary funding to get our police force to a level of 2.5 officers per 1000 citizens. The Mayor and Council need to identify what they will do to secure the necessary funds and come up with a timely plan to achieve the end goal of 4000 officers.**

Our men and women who risk their lives every day to keep the community safe, along with the citizens we serve, deserve better leadership from our Mayor and Council.

PLEA respectfully requests a response from you no later than March 30th.

Sincerely,

Ken Crane  
President  
Phoenix Law Enforcement Association