

Task Force to Recommend a Comprehensive Structure of Oversight and
Accountability for the West Linn Police Department

Prepared By
West Linn City Council
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Overview

In the wake of the settlement of the tort claim filed by Mr. Michael Fesser against the West Linn Police Department in February 2020, many residents have been frustrated, ashamed, and angered by the actions of members of our police department and the lack of repercussions at the time for the individuals involved. City Council members share these concerns.

Demonstrations of outrage grew after the death of Mr. George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis in May. Millions of people around the world gathered in protest against violence and injustice against Black people and to demand police reform and accountability. To address this injustice and outrage and need for reforms in police conduct and oversight, the Council reached out to community and regional partners to listen and seek advice on our next steps to address systemic racism and policing.

The Council first requested unbiased independent investigations into the handling of Mr. Fesser's case by the Clackamas County District Attorney's Office, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and the independent firm OIR Group which are currently underway. In addition, Council seeks to understand the lack of full disclosure when briefed about the details of the case managed by the City's insurance carrier.

Currently, the Council is in the process of hiring an organization to perform an equity audit for the City. This organization will conduct an evaluation of the City's current policies, procedures, and culture, and provide recommendations to disrupt systems of racism, cronyism, and inequity in any form.

Finally, the City Council intends to convene a task force of various stakeholders, experts, and concerned citizens. The aim of the task force is to evaluate past practices, policies, and procedures of the West Linn Police Department to determine if or how those practices, policies, and procedures hamper the ability for the Council and citizens to provide oversight of the Department. We anticipate that the task force and equity audit firm will coordinate their evaluations, findings, policy reforms and any other recommendations in a collaborative and supportive process.

Our City Council is committed to use our legislative capacity to craft policies and reforms that reflect the needs and desires of our citizens, including the right to be safe and welcome here. We must create an equitable and accepting community for all people and are dedicated to the reforms the City will need to undertake to become a diverse, equitable and inclusive

government body serving our community.

Task Force Goals

Corruptive practice and discriminatory behavior have no place in West Linn. Understanding our City's past and current practices and the various needs for reform is complex and will require informed discussions from many perspectives. The goal is to dismantle systems of racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, homophobia, transphobia, gender discrimination, and any other form of bias from our police department and create a structured entity, recommended by the task force, to serve as an oversight entity for the West Linn Police Department.

Task Force Guidelines:

1. Identify the problem: To eradicate and resolve a history of cultural systemic discrimination in the West Linn Police Department. This is expected to include, for example, the review of policing practices, department mission statement language, policies and procedures, structural operations, potential police union contract language, hiring practices, and training.
2. Define the outcome: The task force is a problem-solving group whose purpose is to analyze current structures and systems and recommend policies and procedure reforms and to propose an oversight entity for the West Linn Police Department, for Council review and adoption, as appropriate.
3. Members will be invited by Council after a thorough outreach and application process. In consultation with respected stakeholders, members will be selected through the lens of diversity and inclusion as well as levels of expertise in the work of policing, social justice, racial equity, and police oversight and accountability. Nine members will make up the task force.
4. The task force will meet monthly or twice per month in person or remotely for six months beginning in July 2020. Meeting details and schedules will be determined during the initial meeting. Meetings will include a professional facilitator. One City Councilor will serve as liaison to the task force but will not be a member. All meetings will be public and noticed. Members of the public are welcome to give or submit public comment at each meeting.
5. The process will include a facilitated discussion of root causes of the culture of systemic

discrimination in the WLPD and provide practical solutions. Each member will be asked to provide input based on their expertise. All opinions and ideas will be heard and discussed.

6. Background materials will provide an overview of the subject matter and contain data that can inform the work and eventual solutions. It is important that the background material provides a 360-degree analysis of the problem at hand.
7. At the first meeting, objectives and expected outcomes will be delineated. In addition, an overview of the process and logistics, clear expectations, roles, and responsibilities for members will be provided. Members should agree on such things as attendance requirements and assignment completion responsibility, as well as other responsibilities.
8. The facilitator and Council liaison will focus on eliminating barriers to the group's work and ensure necessary supports are provided, including the fulfillment of additional information needs.
9. At the end of the process, we expect to have a framework of policies and procedures to create an oversight entity. After review by the City Attorney, it will be presented to the City Council for consideration and potential actions, approvals, or adoptions, as appropriate.

Tentative Milestones

June 2020 – Identify potential task force members and invite them to a noticed public meeting in July.

July 2020 -- First public meeting.

September-- December 2020 – Regular meetings.

January 2021-- Draft Document submitted to Council to review.

February 2021-- Document Returned to task force for revision.

March 2021—Final proposal submitted to Council for review and potential approval.

