

MIRIAM HAWLEY

Berkeley City Council
District 5

CONSENT CALENDAR
November 9, 2004

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Miriam Hawley
Subject: Civilianization of Police Department Functions

RECOMMENDATION

Request that the Agenda Committee schedule a Council work session to 1) receive a report from the City Manager and the Police Chief on progress toward implementing the Auditor's recommendations for hiring non-sworn personnel to staff certain police functions, and 2) enable to Council to consider issues involved in replacing sworn officers with non-sworn personnel, particularly to evaluate the best ways of balancing the community's public safety needs under emergency conditions with available resources. This discussion could help in developing the Council's priorities regarding the upcoming recruitment for a Police Chief, given that the incumbent has announced his retirement date.

BACKGROUND

Civilianizing appropriate functions in the Police Department has many advantages, and poses some complex issues. At this time of budget crisis, the savings could be considerable; for example, the cost of an experienced Community Service Officer (CSO) at the end of five years, with benefits, is just over half the cost of a comparably experienced patrol officer.

Most important in the long term is the potential for improvements to the effectiveness of the City's efforts in crime prevention and suppression. Information from other jurisdictions reported by the Auditor indicates not only that CSO's can satisfactorily perform some duties of patrol officers, but also that progressive police management in other jurisdictions report improvements in service.

According to police staff interviewed during the study, increasing the number of CSOs can enhance police presence in the community and help alleviate any staff shortages. A CSO program could also give better representation of community residents. For instance, high school and community college students would have an opportunity to build a career in the Police Department before completing a four-year degree and without necessarily

becoming an armed officer. Police in other jurisdictions also noted that CSOs were good recruiting positions for women and minorities. Others interviewed indicated that non-sworn professional staff could often perform certain management, accounting, and information management duties more efficiently and effectively than armed officers.

Problems that can arise from using non-sworn employees include possible tension between sworn and non-sworn personnel, as well as barriers arising from perceptions about the skills and potential lack of cooperation between the two groups.

A policy issue to be addressed by the Council is that of the level of sworn police staffing needed for safety in the event of emergency situations, given the available resources and opportunities for non-sworn personnel.

The Council has received two separate sets of recommendations in the past ten years for hiring non-sworn personnel. The first came from a comprehensive study of the BPD in 1994 by the Police Executive Research Forum, and included the following comments about community services officers:

“Community services officers are full-time and part-time non-sworn, uniformed employees who handle minor calls for service and provide additional support to police units . . . They relieve sworn officers of handling minor calls such as petty larcenies, vandalism and nuisance calls. They may assist officers on collision scenes, fill in for dispatchers, staff front desk operations, conduct follow-up on criminal cases in support of investigators . . . CSOs can be an integral part of the community involved policing effort, helping to analyze neighborhood concerns in support of patrol officers.”

In April, 2002, in response to anticipated shortages of police staff, the City Manager requested that the Auditor’s office conduct an audit of Police Department staffing. The Auditor was asked to evaluate whether CSOs could perform tasks held by patrol officers, and whether non-sworn employees in professional classifications could effectively perform some of the duties of: 1) a Support Services Lieutenant (primarily information technology tasks), 2) Bureau of Inspection and Control Lieutenant (budgetary tasks), 3) Communications Center Lieutenant (supervises civilian dispatchers), Crime Scene Unit Sergeant (supervises civilian crime technicians), and jail sergeant. (supervises civilian jail staff).

Subsequent reports to Council from the City Manager indicate that some of the recommendations of the two reports were implemented. Nevertheless, it appears that there has not been a decision to hire a significant number of CSOs. Also, it is not clear whether the recommendation to “work with HR and the Budget Office to target areas where police work may be assigned more appropriately and economically.”

A review of progress and options in the coming months can provide police direction about the use of CSOs in the Police Department.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff time to prepare a report and study session.

CONTACT PERSON

Mim Hawley, Councilmember, District 5 981-7150

