

Police Reform Recruitment Working Group  
Meetings Minutes  
February 23, 2021

Mayor Whaley and Judge Parker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Mayor Whaley and Torey Hollingsworth updated the group on the Rule of One charter change. The recommendation was adopted by the Charter Committee, and then by the Commission. Mayor Whaley underscored that this was a significant move – something that had been discussed for decades but never actually done before.

Ellis Jacobs asked why the charter change language gives the authority to the Secretary Chief Examiner.

Ken Thomas explained that the chief examiner reports to the Civil Service Board, and is explicitly discussed in the City Charter. Rule changes by the Chief Examiner must be approved by the Board, and then by the Commission. So while the Chief Examiner can make a recommendation, there is still additional oversight.

Ofc. Salli Jones gave a recruitment update. Recruitment opens on Monday, March 1. They have a large list of potential applicants. They are looking for help with targeting media. Ofc. Jones said she would send out a list of media outlets they are targeting.

William Gillespie said he was disappointed in the efforts so far, because he believed it was too late to change much,

Ofc. Jones agreed – but the pandemic and funding issues did not give them much runway.

Mayor Whaley agreed as well, and emphasized that with federal funding, there will be a class this year meaning that next year they will be better prepped. She also emphasized that police have not heard from many people in the community who want to help with recruitment efforts, and that to solve this, everyone is going to need to be involved.

Sgt. Joe Heyob presented about goals. In order for DPD to reach 36% Black officers in 10 years, there would need to be 13 Black officers per recruit class. That means each class would need to be 56% Black.

- There are 133 sworn officers
- 15 to 20 officers leave through attrition each year
- 23 on average for a recruit class

The hiring pool for DPD is broader than the city, and the region is much whiter than the city itself. That means there will need to be even greater emphasis on targeting recruitment efforts to the population we're looking to recruit.

Sgt. Heyob emphasized that bolstering opportunities to bypass the open competitive list could also be important, since the list will likely be whiter than the city.

Rev. David Fox asked about Black officer retention. He said he doesn't think the goal of 13 Black officers per class is realistic based on previous efforts to recruit Black officers.

William Gillespie said he disagreed. He believes that the goal establishes where the organization wants to go.

Chrisondra Goodwine said she also preferred an aspirational goal because it will get everyone to push harder.

Rev. Fox said at least in the past, DPD itself was a barrier. And it is very hard to find a pool of interested Black candidates. Pay is an issue too, because the suburbs pay competitively.

Rev. Joshua Ward asked Rev. Fox if he was concerned that too aspirational of a goal could be counterproductive.

Rev. Fox said yes, but overall he is trying to make that point that 13 Black officers per class is not realistic. He is concerned that the pool of Black applicants is also even smaller due to previous criminal convictions.

Sgt. Heyob said he is in favor of a long-term aspirational goal. Because Chiefs usually turn over relatively quickly, without a big goal, it will be easy for leadership to say they've tried and had some success and then stop efforts. There needs to be long-term accountability to keep this push going.

Mayor Whaley suggested stretching the time frame to 15 years, and ramping up over time. Staff will bring that back next week. She agrees that a goal should be audacious and meaningful, but must also be realistic. Even at 15 years, it will still be hard and still might not make it. There are a lot of barriers.

Civil Service staff then presented. Ken Thomas talked about slotting in the interview after the background check was complete. The panel was to interview about 60 applicants.