



Interdepartmental Memorandum
CITY OF SAINT PAUL

TO: Mayor Melvin Carter

FROM: Chief Todd Axtell

SUBJECT: **Police Contract**

DATE: February 4, 2022

Mayor Carter,

It is with great concern that I write today to follow up on other conversations we've had about the future of the Saint Paul Police Department.

For the last six years, our officers have embraced and led positive change in the profession. From crisis intervention team training to the revamping of our use of force policy and practices to a commitment to de-escalation to training in ethical policing and moral courage to the development of our COAST unit, our officers have transformed what it means to protect and serve.

For the last two years, our officers have been on the front lines of the fight against the pandemic, showing up for work every day and putting their personal safety on the line while responding to calls for service and investigating crimes on behalf of victims. They've stood on the line to protect our city's buildings and businesses during unprecedented civil unrest. And they are tired.

They've also been working without a contract for more than 400 days.

While our officers are dedicated guardians of the city who have served with courage and grace during incredibly challenging times, we are seeing the extreme toll being understaffed has taken on them.

Right now, we are down nearly 100 officers from our authorized strength of 619 sworn personnel. We're losing officers to other agencies that offer higher wages and more robust benefits. As a matter of fact, this morning I met with an officer who just left the SPPD for

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another jurisdiction offering more money. This is something I have not experienced in my 33 years working for the SPPD. Because we're losing so many officers, we've seen our capacity to connect with the community, engage in innovative crime prevention efforts and give victims the attention they deserve diminish.

Sadly, I don't see this trend changing any time soon.

The recruits in our current academy won't hit the streets until June, and we've yet to schedule our 2022 academy. I continue to hear from officers who express frustration with the lack of a contract and are considering leaving for other cities offering significant wage increases. For example, Maple Grove officers just received a three-year contract for a 3 percent base wage increase for each year, plus a market adjustment of 10 percent. The Minnesota Legislature increased top pay for State Troopers by 10.4 percent. And other agencies are following suit.

My fear is that if we can't compete with other agencies, we'll continue to see the unraveling of what is and has been a premier law enforcement destination agency. With that in mind, I am respectfully requesting that you help us keep the talent we currently have—the talent in which the city has invested tens of millions of dollars—and ensure that we can recruit the next generation of guardians to our agency.

The best way to achieve both is to offer a competitive compensation package that makes our officers the best paid in the state. Doing so will help us stop people from leaving the department, protect the core values that make our department special and ensure that we can continue to deliver the level of service our community expects and deserves. In addition, I encourage the City to explore retention and recruitment bonuses.

If not, I believe the SPPD will no longer be known as a "destination police department," where the best of the best desire to work.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this most important request. As always, I'm available around the clock if you'd like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,



Todd Axtell
CHIEF OF POLICE

Cc: Council President Amy Brendmoen
Deputy Mayor Jaime Tincher
Human Resources Director/Chief Equity Officer Toni Newborn
Labor Relations Manager Jason Schmidt
Assistant Chief Rob Thomasser
Deputy Chief Don Benner

Deputy Chief Jeremy Ellison
Deputy Chief Julie Maidment
Deputy Chief Stacy Murphy
Senior Commander Nicole Spears
Public Info. Manager Steve Linders