




OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER CHRISTOPHER WARD THIRD COUNCIL DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 20, 2017

TO: Council President Myrtle Cole
Councilmember Chris Cate, Chair, Public Safety and Livable
Neighborhoods Committee

FROM: Councilmember Christopher Ward 

SUBJECT: Establishment of Police Chief Council Confirmation Process

I respectfully request the Council take action as soon as possible to establish a concrete confirmation process for the City of San Diego's next police chief. City staff has established a timeline for recruiting and reviewing candidates for this position, and following a great deal of public advocacy, recently completed a process to solicit feedback from community members on priorities for this critical hire.

In addition to what the executive branch may have in store for its internal vetting of potential candidates, it's important that the City Council also establish a concrete process to inform the public and thoroughly review finalists and the ultimate nominee beyond a single confirmation vote.

These recommendations are specifically to establish a council procedure for administering the confirmation process. Specifically, this process would provide a mechanism for the Council to be properly equipped to fulfill its responsibility stated in the City Charter of providing an informed confirmation which earns the faith of the public. This process should be in addition to a transparent search panel, which includes representatives from the Gang Commission, Citizens Advisory Board on Police/Community Relations, Community Review Board on Police Practices, and Human Relations Commission, youth representation, and a clear reflection of San Diego's full diversity on the panel. As City Council considers establishing a procedure as outlined below, it will remain important that the Mayor take the steps necessary to implement a transparent search panel as described above to review and interview applicants, and make recommendations about the finalists.

- Docket a report to the full City Council providing the results from the six community conversation forums and online survey conducted by the City to receive feedback from the general public about their priorities for the next Police Chief, prior to development of a police chief job description or recruitment bulletin. It's critical that Councilmembers be aware of the information provided to appropriately gauge whether those priorities are reflected in an eventual nominee. This update should also include for review the assessment criteria to be used in the search process, similar to the search process in Seattle (2014), led by the same firm that has been retained for San Diego's search. It's particularly important that both the public and the Council have this information early in the process to know what priorities are shaping the search for our next chief.
- At least one public meeting with the identified finalists for the Mayor's consideration prior to a nomination being offered. While there is appropriate reason to protect the anonymity of potential candidates in earlier parts of the recruitment process, it's important for the public to have an understanding of the options available, and for finalists to be available for public vetting. Recent police chief searches in Tucson (2015), San Francisco (2016), and Phoenix (2016) have all disclosed finalists, as did Seattle (2014) in a search conducted by the same firm that San Diego has retained for our current search.
- Following the nomination by the Mayor of a candidate for police chief, at least one committee-level confirmation hearing in the Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods Committee, and one public town hall-style meeting to allow the nominee to address questions from the Councilmembers specifically tasked with the Public Safety issue area and members of the public.

The City and Council are establishing a new process for selecting a police chief that has no previous precedent in San Diego. It will not only select a new chief this time, but will provide the framework for searches in the future. The Council must move quickly to ensure a smooth confirmation process, and this structure will provide members of the public sufficient input to this choice, allow Councilmembers to make an informed decision, and generate the buy-in necessary to allow our next police chief to be as successful as possible.

cc:

Mara W. Elliott, City Attorney
Hon. Kevin L. Faulconer, Mayor