




**OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER CHRISTOPHER WARD  
THIRD COUNCIL DISTRICT**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

DATE: November 29, 2017

TO: Ron Villa, Deputy Chief Operating Officer

FROM: Councilmember Christopher Ward 

SUBJECT: Clarification of Transparency in Chief of Police Recruitment Process

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Thank you for taking the time to provide an update on the City of San Diego's search process for our next Chief of Police to council offices and the Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods Committee on Thursday, November 16. I appreciated your public review of timeline, approach, potential participant structure as well as a summary of the common community concerns and desired candidate qualifications from the six community meetings and online survey. Further, I am grateful for the opportunity to receive and incorporate where possible feedback to make this process stronger, more inclusive, and more transparent in pursuit of the best possible outcome. As I mentioned at the end of my comments when my time expired at Committee, there remained a few questions and aspects of the process which were not definitively resolved.

Particularly given the tight timetable between now and the beginning of the interview process, I appreciate your responses to confirm the specifics of this process early enough to provide certainty to candidates for the position, city staff, councilmembers, and the general public.

During the committee hearing, there was a commitment to disclose the law enforcement experts who will be participating in the interview process. While it is appropriate to wait until we can avoid any potential conflict of interest, it is critical that if these individuals have influence over recommending candidates, their identities be made public. When and how will the names of those individuals be disclosed?

Who will comprise the community interview panels? Will the Mayor have full decision-making power over who will fill these positions, or could councilmembers also have a say in determining these representatives to ensure broad, reflective representation of the community?

There was a discussion of revising the role of community input to ensure that this feedback is included before the field of candidates is reduced to finalists, rather than just being provided to the Mayor. In order to be meaningful, it is necessary that this input be factored in before candidates are recommended or removed from further consideration. While it's reasonable to respect the time of candidates for the position, will there be an opportunity to process feedback from community representatives before finalists are selected? If so, what will that process be?

Particularly since outside law enforcement experts will already be included in the decision to identify the finalists, can representatives of the community panels be included in the deliberations which will reduce the field of candidates to three finalists?

Finally, in response to a question during the committee hearing, we were told that no determination has yet been made on disclosing the names of the finalists and/or making them available for council or public vetting. Having this opportunity is important to understanding what options are available before casting a well-informed council vote to confirm the next chief. Additionally, large comparable cities such as Tucson, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Seattle have all recently conducted searches which disclosed the finalists and made them publicly available. Will the identities of the finalists be made public, if so when? Additionally, will these finalists be available to councilmembers and/or the public prior to a nominee being selected by the Mayor?

While the Charter assigns responsibility to the Mayor to nominate the next chief, there's clear consensus that the next chief – and San Diegans in general – are best served by a process which has earned public trust. The feedback we've received make it very clear that a transparent process with meaningful community involvement and all panel members publicly identified is a top priority. Both staff and advocates have done great work to strengthen community outreach and incorporated process modifications to date, and now it's critical that we finish strong.

It will be essential that everyone who participates in vetting these candidates are publicly disclosed, that community representatives are included in not only the first stage of interviews, but also second stage where the field will be narrowed. There also needs to be a public opportunity to meet the finalists. Staff has consistently expressed an openness to achieving these goals, and I look forward to finalizing an inclusive, transparent, and successful recruitment process that provides the public with confidence in the nominee and results in a smooth confirmation.

Cc: Councilmember Chris Cate, Chair, Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods Committee  
Mara W. Elliott, City Attorney  
Kevin L. Faulconer, Mayor