COUNCILMEMBER CHRIS CATE
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
SIXTH DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: **May 3, 2017**

TO: **Honorable Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer**
Shelley Zimmerman, Chief, San Diego Police Department

FROM: **Councilmember Chris Cate**

SUBJECT: **Marketing Campaign for San Diego Police Department Recruitment**

At the April 26th meeting of the Committee on Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods, there was a robust discussion regarding the current staffing level of the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) as well as the Department's ongoing efforts to recruit and retain sworn police officers. Based on the report, SDPD continues to lose police officers either to other agencies or due to retirement at an alarming rate. To date in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, the Department has lost a total of 137 police officers, 16 of which have left for other law enforcement agencies. Most notably the Department anticipates approximately 600 police officers to be eligible for retirement in the next five years.

Recruiting and retaining quality officers to the full budgeted staffing level of 2,039 sworn officers is an issue that needs to be solved by creative solutions. While the San Diego Police Department's Recruitment Division has done an outstanding job over the years with the resources provided to them, we need to prioritize funding for a robust and strategic recruitment campaign to broaden the Department's reach and attract quality applicants. The number of applicants has decreased by 36 percent over the last two fiscal years. In FY17, the San Diego Police Department was budgeted with $50,000 to fund its entire recruitment program. This funding includes travel costs to attend job fairs, marketing, advertisements, and promotional item costs. The Recruitment Division also puts uniformed officers in charge of not just the logistics of recruiting, but the development and execution of the marketing, advertising, and public relations strategy.

Departments throughout the country are facing similar staffing shortages and recruitment issues. However, while there is never one solution to a problem, there is more we can do to remain competitive in attracting and recruiting new officers.

Proposal

The City Council should allocate up to $500,000 in the FY18 budget to the San Diego Police Department for the purpose of securing a contract with a professional marketing firm to develop a comprehensive marketing and recruitment plan. My office will be including this allocation within our revised budget priority memo, as well as other funding requests to assist in this effort. These requests will also include a funding source.

The San Diego Police Department should issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking a marketing firm to create and execute a comprehensive marketing plan with the goal of increasing the number of applicants and recruits.

This proposal can help address two main objectives:

- To creatively and strategically market SDPD in a data-driven manner as a desirable place to be a police officer.
- To increase the number of individuals applying to the San Diego Police Department.

The scope of the contract should be to create a thorough SDPD recruitment marketing plan that includes, but is not limited to:

1) An outreach strategy;
2) Research of current trends and analysis of our police officer attrition;
3) Development of an advertising plan, including print, web, radio, television, social media, etc.;
4) Conducting focus groups and market research to determine the most effective messaging and advertising platforms and placements;
5) Comprehensive market research on the most effective cities and locations to conduct recruitment fairs, trips, and other recruitment efforts; and
6) A new website specifically geared towards recruitment.

As a comparison, other City departments frequently contract with outside firms to help develop and execute marketing efforts for specific purposes and projects:

- Public Utilities Department—Waste No Water/Drought Campaign: $850,000 5-year contract. The contract was with City Works—a marketing firm that helped develop its marketing campaign, market research, creative slogans, and public outreach strategy.
- Public Utilities Department—Pure Water Project: $1 million. The scope of the contract helped develop a public outreach and education campaign, social media strategy, messaging plan, and conduct market research to determine what kind of outreach is most effective. Pure Water had a 28 percent approval rating in 2005 compared to a 73 percent approval rating in 2012 due to effective outreach, messaging, and education efforts.

Many cities across the United States have also hired marketing firms to assist in developing comprehensive marketing strategies to enhance recruitment efforts. Cities in California, such as San Jose, West Covina, Chino, and Fontana, and across the country, such as New York City and Memphis, Tennessee, have already contracted with professional marketing firms or are in the process of issuing RFPs to do so. While the scope, costs, and results of those contracts vary from each department, it is clear that many police departments across the country are trending toward seeking help from professional marketing firms to assist them with their recruitment efforts.

The City of San Diego's shortage of sworn police officers is a crisis that is only going to worsen. The City Council must do all it can to be creative in finding solutions and be willing to prioritize the necessary funding. While this proposal alone will not solve the issue, it will be progress toward a solution and send a positive message to our police officers and the community that our City government makes public safety its number one priority.