

Curtatone Acts Quickly To Begin Police Reform, Reorganization

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Mayor Names Independent Advisory Board, Appoints Bradley Acting Chief and Submits Petition for Appointed Chief

SOMERVILLE – Mayor Joe Curtatone today appointed two law enforcement professionals and a Somerville attorney to a new police advisory committee charged with overseeing the reform and reorganization of the police department. He also appointed Captain Robert Bradley as acting chief of police and submitted a home rule petition to the Board of Aldermen to remove the chief's position from civil service and make it an appointed position. The moves come in the wake of Chief George McLean's announcement today that he was retiring effective March 7, 2005.

"We're paving the way for a sweeping reform and modernization of the police department," said Curtatone. "We want to give our officers all the support and tools they need to make this the best police force in the Commonwealth."

Curtatone named former Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, State Police Colonel Thomas G. Robbins, and Jacques A. Dessin, an attorney who lives in Somerville and practices in Boston, to the advisory committee, which will consider recommendations made in Harshbarger's recent review of the department, among other changes. The mayor left open the possibility of naming additional people to the committee next week.

"We believe we have the right mix of law enforcement expertise and civilian input," said Curtatone. "This group will certainly not be afraid to recommend dramatic change where it's needed."

The mayor also said Bradley was the right person to take over the department immediately because of his deep knowledge of the department and his long and distinguished career as an officer and detective.

"As detective chief in the 80's and early 90's, Bob Bradley worked with former Attorney General and former D.A. Scott Harshbarger, current A.G. and former D.A. Tom Reilly, and current D.A. Martha Coakley, among others, to put hundreds of criminals behind bars," said Curtatone. "He knows how to target problems like drug abuse and gang activity and take action quickly. He'll hit the ground running on Monday."

Bradley, 60, grew up in Somerville, attended Somerville High School and later graduated with a B.A. in law enforcement from Salem State College. He joined the SPD in 1969 and was made captain in 1983. He is the longest serving member on the force and has held numerous leadership positions in the department, including chief of detectives (for 12 years) and director of the police academy. He is a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy in Quantico, VA, the National Crime Prevention Institute at the University of Kentucky, and the New England School of Law Enforcement Management at Babson College.

Last January, Curtatone tapped Bradley to oversee the Traffic and Parking Department, and he quickly adjusted officer routes and shifted personnel to ensure regular patrols, reduced overtime and other costs, and became the second department head to institute Curtatone's Somerstat system, which allows the city for the first time to capture and analyze data within the department to better target resources, improve service and enhance collections.

"Bob Bradley has helped modernize the Traffic and Parking Department and he will modernize the police department in the same way," Curtatone said. "Together, we will give the SPD the 21st century crime tools it needs."

Curtatone said Bradley would serve as acting chief until the proposed home rule petition removing the chief's position from civil service is passed by the Board of Aldermen and the state legislature. A permanent chief will then be appointed.

Curtatone advocated an appointed police chief while running for mayor in 2003. Many Massachusetts communities now have appointed chiefs or commissioners, including Boston and Cambridge. Most major metropolitan areas outside Massachusetts, including New York City and Los Angeles, also have appointed chiefs.

"Without the home rule change, a police chief can operate without any real level of accountability," said Curtatone. "A chief needs to be held to the same performance standards as everyone else and a chief needs to know he or she can be removed if those standards are not met."

Former Mayors Michael Capuano and Gene Brune both sought to make the shift to an appointed chief during their tenures. The BOA voted against the Capuano proposal; the Brune proposal passed the BOA but was blocked in the legislature.

Curtatone said the next permanent chief must be a strong leader capable of boosting morale throughout the department and willing to work with the administration, the Board of Aldermen, and the community to make the department state-of-the-art.

"Chief McLean led us through a difficult budget time," Curtatone said. "The next chief should be able to open a new chapter in the force's history."