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To: Honorable City Council

RE: City Council Agenda Item 211826, *That this Council review the past 20 years of the City's Police Department reform recommendations and the resultant changes.*

On May 25, 2021, the Committee on Finance heard a presentation and engaged in a discussion about the history of the Somerville Police Department (SPD) budget and reforms. The presentation primarily focused on the 2001 Police Management Study conducted by MMA Consulting Group, the subsequent memo written by former Attorney General Scott Harshbarger that evaluated SPD's progress on the recommendations outlined in the 2001 study, and the 2005 Police Advisory Group Report.

The Somerville Police Department has undergone significant reforms since the 2001 study was released. The study resulted in approximately 82 recommendations, most of which have been implemented. The presentation focused on three primary recommendations: civilianization of specific police roles, more effective use of police resources, and better management to increase efficiency.

The SPD appreciates the community's interest in the history and evolution of the Department. The Department is submitting this memo to provide clarification on some of the points discussed during the Finance Committee meeting that lacked the context needed for a more complete and accurate understanding of these reforms and of the Department. The memo will discuss several specific recommendations and the resulting reforms, and our hope is to provide the Council and the public with a deeper understanding of the Somerville Police Department.

Civilianization of Police Roles

The presentation focused on the failure of the Department to civilianize all nine positions recommended in the 2001 report, but seven of the nine recommended positions were formally civilianized. Of the remaining two positions, one (Traffic Clerk) was eliminated and replaced with a police officer tasked with traffic enforcement duties and overseeing crossing guards, and another (CID Clerk) was reconfigured to a much needed investigative

function. This officer currently maintains a full investigation caseload and is primarily in charge of credit card and identity theft investigations, as well as fielding walk-in complaints of criminal activity that require an investigative report.

In addition to the nine positions discussed in the 2001 report, the Department has civilianized numerous positions formerly carried out by police officers since 1984. These positions include a Crime Analyst, Fleet Manager, Information Technology Officer, Detail Office, Records Bureau, and the entire 911 staff. In addition, the Department now staffs with civilians a Victim Witness Advocate, a second Information Technology employee, the entire COHR staff, and a second Crime Analyst.

Station Officers

The presentation discussed the study's recommendation that the SPD eliminate the police officers assigned as "station officers" who are seated at the 911 Center; however, several important changes have been made since the study regarding the utilization of these officers. These officers are no longer seated adjacent to the 911 Center; they were relocated to serve in the main lobby to interact with residents and generate reports, in an attempt to increase efficiency by alleviating the need for the area cruiser to come to the station to take a report. Residents frequently come to the police station looking to speak with an officer and seeking assistance in matters that have legal consequences, like filing an emergency restraining order or a criminal complaint. Officers have a sound basis of legal knowledge that can assist residents with their legal rights.

Additionally, pursuant to MGL Chapter 40, section 36B, each occupied cell needs to be physically or visibly checked for the prevention and intervention of suicide based on a reasonable standard of care for detainees; and pursuant to Department policy, this check needs to be completed every thirty minutes. These checks are completed by station officers, recorded and stored electronically.

Station officers are also responsible for assisting the Commander in processing detainees (fingerprints, photos, search, etc.), transporting detainees to and from an incident location to the station, and transporting detainees to court.

City Hall Positions

The presentation discussed the utility of the officers assigned to support city operations by the Mayor, of which there are currently two. One is assigned to the Inspectional Services Department (ISD), and is responsible for assisting the department in the investigations of building and code violations. This officer is part of the City's Neighborhood Impact Team and is frequently utilized to address neighborhood issues that also involve ISD. This officer

has addressed numerous problem houses surrounding Tufts University and has been integral in getting absentee landlords to address problem properties.

The second is assigned to the Licensing Commission. This individual performs random checks of liquor establishments for liquor law violations, conducts investigations as needed, and serves as a liaison to state liquor licensing agencies.

These officers assist their respective departments with enforcement issues that may have legal implications or necessitate legal assistance with matters such as interviewing someone suspected of a crime or filing a criminal complaint.

There is no longer an officer assigned to the Law Office.

Crime Trends

The presentation highlighted a conclusion from the study that the Department did not efficiently evaluate crime trends and target resources effectively to address the trends. The Department has utilized a crime analyst since the mid 1990s to decipher and evaluate shifting trends in criminal activity and continues to do so in an effort to utilize its resources effectively. The Department added a second crime analyst in 2014 to increase the Department's analytical capacity.

Several examples that required the shifting of police resources for lengthy periods of time in response to the work of the Crime Analysis Unit include: the identification of the MS-13 gang members in East Somerville and subsequent gang-related crime in that area, the current gang and gun-related violence in the City, the series of indecent assaults in West Somerville, the series of early morning arsons in Ward 2, and the series of housebreaks in West Somerville.

The Department frequently deploys additional resources by reassigning existing patrol officers or on overtime based on crime trends.

SPD Funding and Budget Cuts

The budget figures depicted in the presentation include both police and civilian salaries, as well as ordinary maintenance costs. The FY21 budget was cut by the City Council by approximately \$700K; however, the presentation did not note that additional funds were cut to the police budget before it was submitted to the Council for a total reduction of \$1.29M. The reduction resulted in funding three fewer patrol officers and one fewer Captain.

During the last budget cycle, the police budget was cut and funds diverted to other programs, including the formation of a Racial and Social Justice Department that will oversee the reimaging policing initiative.

Furthermore, in comparing fiscal year budgets, the presentation used the approved budget total for FY06 (\$10,497.953), and compared it to the proposed FY20 amount (\$17,044.021) rather than the approved FY20 budget that amounted to \$16,824.306.

Comparing the 2006 approved budget (\$10,497,953) to the approved FY21 budget (\$15,483,052), the increase equals \$4,985,099. Most of the increase during this 15 year period resulted from the hiring of civilian personnel and cost of living adjustments pursuant to collective bargaining settlements.

Overtime Costs

The presentation and subsequent discussion focused on a decrease in overtime spending over the last fiscal year. Overtime spending was down for the first three quarters of the FY21 budget cycle; however, this was in large part due to the pandemic and accompanying restrictions, which resulted in the closing of the court system, decreased traffic stops and traffic hearings, the inability to conduct Department training, and a decrease in police details. As the pandemic restrictions were reduced and now lifted, the Department has made inroads in satisfying mandatory training.

In addition to these areas of focus, one of the major recommendations of the 2001 management study was that the Department update its internal policies and standard operating procedures. The Department exceeded this recommendation by achieving Massachusetts Police Certification in 2017 and Accreditation status in 2019. Somerville is the most densely populated urban police department to achieve this status and one of very few that are accredited. Accreditation means the Department has a complete set of policies that follow the industry's best practices. This status is vital to the Department's success under the current State Police Reform bill. Based on this status, the Department automatically meets certain standards set forth under this new legislation.

This memo is not meant to be a complete or exhaustive explanation of reforms to the SPD over the past twenty years, but is instead meant to add necessary context and clarity to some of the points discussed at the Finance Committee meeting on May 25. Going forward, community members interested in this information should feel free to reach out to the SPD, as we are more than happy to engage in discussions that may help provide this kind of context at the outset.

We are in a different place as a Department and as a City than we were twenty years ago. The SPD has made many changes with the hopes of better serving Somerville and its residents, and is committed to continually evolving to ensure it is meeting the needs of this community. The Department looks forward to working in collaboration with the Administration, the Director of Racial and Social Justice, the Council, and the community, through the reimagining policing and civilian oversight processes.

We look forward to continuing discussions at the upcoming public hearing and the police department budget hearing in the coming weeks.