



**Staff Report**

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**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**THROUGH:** Steve Powers, City Manager  
**FROM:** Courtney Knox Busch, Strategic Initiatives Manager

**SUBJECT:**

Independent Assessment of the Salem Police Department’s Policies, Procedures and Operations (Performance Audit)

Ward(s): All Wards  
Councilor(s): All Councilors  
Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods  
Result Area(s): Good Governance; Safe Community; Safe, Welcoming and Livable Community.

**ISSUE:**

Presentation and discussion of the Independent Assessment of the Salem Police Department’s Policies, Procedures and Operations (Performance Audit).

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Information only.

**SUMMARY:**

The purpose of the Joint Work Session is to consider findings and recommendations from the Independent Assessment of the Salem Police Department’s Policies, Procedures and Operations (Attachment 1) conducted by Hillard Heintze. Hillard Heintze, with guidance from a steering committee, reviewed the Police Department's policies, procedures and programs for interactions with unsheltered individuals; interactions with individuals experiencing behavioral health crises; engagement with our community with particular attention to black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); response to assemblies and crowds; department capacity; use of force; and officer accountability. Steering Committee members and staff from Hillard Heintze will be available at the work session to discuss findings and resulting recommendations in the draft assessment.

## FACTS AND FINDINGS:

To support this work and desired engagement with our community, the City assembled an advisory group of community leaders with expertise in the performance audit's focus areas. The Steering Committee serves as a sounding board at key milestones and decision points. The Steering Committee and performance auditing firm were supported by a staff group comprised of representatives from the City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office, Human Resources and Police Department.

The Steering Committee met seven times to review progress, discuss goals and objectives, and provide suggestions for community listening sessions. All agendas and discussion summaries are available here: <https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/police-audit.aspx>.

The Steering Committee received reports on more than 35 community listening sessions conducted by Hillard Heintze. Several Steering Committee members participated in the virtual meetings and reported appreciation for the open and honest candor of the conversations.

Interviews and focused group community conversations:

- African American clergy
- Business community (Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, SEDCOR, Homebuilders Association, Realtors Association)
- Center for Hope and Safety
- Challenge to End Youth Homelessness
- Community Policing Performance Audit Steering Committee members
- Coordinated Outreach Providers
- Department of Public Safety, Standards and Training
- Grassroots organizers, activists and leaders
- Mano a Mano Focus Group
- Mayor and City Councilors
- NAACP Board
- Neighborhood Association Chairs
- Northwest Human Services (clinic, transitional programs, HOAP, hotline staff)
- Salem Keizer School District leadership
- Salem Community Police Review Board
- Salem Human Rights Commission
- Salem Health (emergency and security)
- The Challenge: Ending Youth Homelessness
- Unsheltered resident focus group (through ARCHES)
- Willamette Valley Communications Center
- City of Salem: City Manager; Police Chief, command staff, union; Public Works, Community Development, and Fire departments.

Community members were encouraged to *Share Your Story* through the City's website. The Audit describes input from the 140 stories submitted.

Following the Work Session, the City will host community briefings to gather input on implementation of the Audit recommendations.

## **BACKGROUND:**

**Why a performance audit?** The performance audit was guided by several questions:

- Are the Police Department's policies and tactics aligned with City Council and community values and expectations? Including when officers are present or responding to peaceful assemblies, permitted protests and demonstrations, and impromptu crowds?
- What is the Department's capacity for community policing?
- How effective are Salem police officers in engaging with all Salem residents, including unsheltered individuals and individuals experiencing behavioral health crises?
- How effective is the Department's engagement with youth?
- Are the Department's policies, tactics, or training biased or discriminatory? How effective are Salem police officers in engaging with members of our BIPOC community?
- How effective are the Police Department and City's systems, policies, and procedures for officer accountability?

**Third-party review.** Hillard Heintze was selected for the Community Policing Performance Audit for their expertise in policing, community engagement, and equity and inclusion. Evaluation committee representatives were experienced in accountability, performance auditing as a discipline, policing, outreach and engagement, committee facilitation, and policy analysis.

Courtney Knox Busch  
Strategic Initiatives Manager

Attachments:1 - An Independent Assessment of the Salem Police Department's Policies, Procedures and Operations (Performance Audit), draft