

Item 25-1002: Police Department Staffing Study Update

Item 25-1000: Request the Approval of Table of Organization Police Department Human Resources Information Technology Committee

Wed, Aug 27, 2025 6:30PM

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 01:38

Now if it pleases you to, we could please take up item number 25-1002, informational item regarding the police department staffing study update. Which of you two would like to speak? Chief Olson, District 2.

Police Chief Polly Olson 02:01

Thank you, Chair. So, at the conclusion of the last budget cycle, the common council provided approval to fund a staffing study for the police department. The study was commenced in December of 2024, and the final draft was received in July of—basically, last month. I'd like to just get a few things on the record, one of one of which is that we, the Appleton Police Department, has a long history of being an innovative and progressive police agency. When I was hired 25 years ago, the APD was one of very few agencies seeking candidates with diverse backgrounds and experience. And lucky for me, they valued those things because I am where I am today because of that. They placed value on higher education, rewarding employees who obtain advanced degrees. This practice has not changed. Although the landscape of policing has evolved significantly, our standards and expectations remain high and consistent.

Police Chief Polly Olson 02:59

The staffing study brought to light the strengths of our agency. It also identified some areas where changes might help to positively address some of the pain points that our staff has experienced. Regardless of the recommendations we ultimately implement, the actionable strategies illuminated in this study will help guide us in the right direction to ensure we continue our long-standing practice of excellence in policing.

Police Chief Polly Olson 03:21

The request for Matrix was to provide essential insights to ensure adequate staffing levels, optimize our service delivery through all divisions within the organization, and meet the needs of the evolving community. This process was data driven, with a large emphasis placed on our CAD data, which is basically computer-generated data and case management information. It is difficult to capture the nuances within an agency when relying heavily on summative statistical data alone. When considered alongside departmental knowledge of the nuances and context behind said data, the report's recommendations have been found reasonable or expected to further enhance our ability to effectively serve this community.

Police Chief Polly Olson 04:12

The reason I felt it was necessary to share some of that is just to understand that, because this is approximately 150-page report, being able to kind of go through it, which I did in the rest of the memo, in a summary of the recommendations with what they highlighted, and then, in red, what I intend to do with some of those recommendations. Again, in the interest of time, I don't intend on going through all of those, but one thing I would like to highlight which leads us into our action item is a minor change to the table of organization, which is basically taking one of our 12 patrol lieutenants and moving that position into our professional development unit.

Police Chief Polly Olson 05:00

So, in the in the organizational study, one of the areas that were highlighted was basically the lack of staffing we have in our training department right now. It is staffed by one professional development supervisor who oversees all of our training, equipment, onboarding of new employees, our field training program. It's a lot for one person to be taking on, and the recommendation was actually to add two FTE officers to that unit. I think we can meet our needs by reassigning one of our patrol lieutenants into that role and accomplish what we need to accomplish through that change, which is what I'm requesting to do with the TO change.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 05:53

Thank you. Director Ratchman, you have anything to add?

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 05:59

Thank you, Chair. Unless there's questions, I think the chief's done a nice job of outlining what's been found. So.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 06:05

Thank you. Does anyone here have any questions in regards to the informational item that was presented by the chief? You can follow up further if we want to later, but if you have any questions right now.

Alderman Nate Wolff (District 12) 06:17

Follow up later.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 06:20

Alderman Croatt, any questions? All right. Then, please, if we could, let's move back to our action items. Item number 25-1000, request to approve the table of organization for the police department.

Alderman Nate Wolff (District 12) 06:28

Motion to approve.

Alderman Adrian Stancil-Martin (District 11) 06:31

Second.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 06:32

Motion and a second on the floor. Any other discussion? Thoughts? When I first saw this, I totally missed the fact that one of the lieutenants was—it went from 6 to 5, but then the other one, I missed that it had been stricken. So, I'm seeing that we're generally going to be not having any kind of issues with fulfilling salaries or paying these folks. Director Ratchman?

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 07:02

So, if you look at the table of organization change, it is a cost neutral switch. It's basically taking lieutenants from one section and moving them over to the other and retitling those lieutenants or their area of specialty.

Alderman Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 07:16

The retitling does not include any additional salary grade changes or anything?

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 07:22

It does not.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 07:23

Excellent. Thank you. Any other questions? Alder Wolff.

Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 07:25

As always, I'm very impressed by the police department's ability to figure out how to best serve this community within the bonds—binds of our budget, and figuring out how to elevate our service at the same time is very impressive, and I always ask as well if there needs to be more for training and/or other services as well. And I'm always impressed by the answers that I get. Thank you for your continued service to this community.

Police Chief Polly Olson 07:58

Thank you. I appreciate hearing that.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 08:01

Thank you. Alder Wolff—to Alder Wolff's point, and back to a little bit about the study, the staffing study, I was impressed that—and it wasn't a surprise to me that it seems as though APD is so well run that there aren't substantial changes required. I mean, obviously there are some things that need to be done based on that study, but nothing that said we are so out of control and need this, that, and the other thing. So, I was very impressed to see that. And again, not surprised. Alder Croatt.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 08:36

Thank you, Chair. And I would echo those comments. I think it was a confirmation of all the great things that APD P Did—PD does, but also identified some opportunities for improvement and growth. So, I was very happy with what I saw and support the changes that would come forward.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 08:55

Excellent. Any other feedback from anybody in regards to this action item? All right, there being—

Police Chief Polly Olson 08:59

May just add one thing, Chair? Yeah, I just want to, want to add to that, that we could not be where we're at today without the great connection that I feel like our department has with the community and its members, and that this this isn't something that that we operate in a silo doing, right? It really does come down to the connections that that we work hard to maintain, and that starts at the top, and it also includes our council and our mayor and the rest of the directors and how the city is run. So, I'm really proud of the work that they do, and I think it was showcased in this staffing study. So, thank you for giving me the opportunity to bring that forward.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 09:00

Agreed. Thank you. There being no other discussion, all those in favor, please signify by saying aye. Aye. Opposed and abstentions? None and none. So that passes three to zero. Thank you, Chief Olson.