

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Mayor Deasy called the Special Meeting of the Flagstaff City Council held April 26, 2021, to order at 5:01 p.m.

NOTICE OF OPTION TO RECESS INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.02, notice is hereby given to the members of the City Council and to the general public that, at this work session, the City Council may vote to go into executive session, which will not be open to the public, for legal advice and discussion with the City's attorneys for legal advice on any item listed on the following agenda, pursuant to A.R.S. §38-431.03(A)(3).

2. Pledge of Allegiance and Mission Statement

The Council and audience recited the pledge of allegiance and Councilmember Shimoni read the Mission Statement of the City of Flagstaff.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the City of Flagstaff is to protect and enhance the quality of life for all.

3. **ROLL CALL**

NOTE: One or more Councilmembers may be in attendance telephonically or by other technological means.

PRESENT:

ABSENT:

MAYOR DEASY (virtually)
VICE MAYOR DAGGETT (virtually)
COUNCILMEMBER ASLAN (virtually)
COUNCILMEMBER MCCARTHY (virtually)
COUNCILMEMBER SALAS (virtually)
COUNCILMEMBER SHIMONI (virtually)
COUNCILMEMBER SWEET (virtually)

Others present: City Manager Greg Clifton; City Attorney Sterling Solomon.

4. Consider and approve this Special Meeting agenda as posted.

Moved by Councilmember Adam Shimoni, **seconded by** Mayor Paul Deasy to approve the Special Meeting agenda as posted.

Vote: 7 - 0 - Unanimously

5. Budgeting and Operational Considerations for Policing and Social Service Alternatives

Mayor Deasy thanked Council for the opportunity to have the discussion. He stated that there is no formal presentation for the topic, rather it is a way to open the dialogue with the community for them to voice their opinion.

Mr. Clifton stated that staff included materials in the agenda packet that provide a timeline presentations from last year, along with the presentation materials that were provided by staff in response to the FAIR items.

The following individuals addressed Council asking for the Police Department budget to be reduced or defunded:

- Victoria Monsaint–Queeney
- Harper Rowan
- Joanna Wheaton
- Steve Eberly
- Sarah Andrews
- Jasmine Mueller-Hsia
- Whitney Holeva-Eklund
- Kyle Nitschke
- Erin Hiebert
- Emily Davalos
- Mandy Gebler
- Lydia Bailey
- Summer White
- Kelly Wilson
- Hannah Lee
- John Viktora
- Rachel Russ
- Jessi Quizar
- Yisha Ng
- Nina Porter
- Dr. Michael Caulkins
- Barry Bertani
- Sarah-Grace Crocco
- Deirdre Conroy
- Darrell Marks
- Morgan Murray
- Nora Timmerman
- Carmenlita Chief
- Linda Bianciotto
- Christi Weigand

The following comments were received:

- The police harass unsheltered people.

- Only 3.5% of arrests are related to violent crimes.
- Support defunding the police budget by 55%.
- Reallocate funds to affordable housing and education.
- Flagstaff citizens can govern themselves.
- Allocate funding to other priorities.
- Flagstaff is not immune from negative police experiences.
- Flagstaff needs housing, not handcuffs.
- There is a nationwide pattern of violence against black and brown people.
- Flagstaff has a shoot and kill rate two times higher than the national average.
- Community centers could be developed with funding from the police department.
- Reduce the budget a move toward alternate response models.
- Funding of the police department does not solve the underlying issues.
- Homelessness and social inequities suppress the most vulnerable in the community; fund social services instead of pushing them into the criminal justice system.
- Flagstaff criminalizes homelessness.
- The police have the impression that there will be less support if defunded, that is not true, it means they would have less calls to attend to.
- Police do not stop crime, they only respond.
- Reallocate funding to better housing options, mental health intervention, and substance abuse support.
- Tyler Stewart would still be alive if there had been a defunding because there would have been a mental health intervention.
- Defund and consider models in other cities that use unarmed social workers.
- There are better models to take pressure off police who are not trained to respond to mental health emergencies.
- People armed with fatal weapons does not make the community safer.
- Invest in prevention instead of punishment.

A break was held from 7:20 p.m. through 7:30 p.m.

The following individuals addressed Council in opposition to defunding or reducing the Police Department budget:

- Jennifer Brown
- Thomas Bianciotto
- Michael Oliver
- George Holberg
- Steve Finch
- Justin Youngman
- Destiney Evans
- Dixie Callan
- Gwin Filleman
- Laryssa George
- Anthony Garcia
- Sheena White
- Susana Tovalin
- Rachel Bellar
- Michael Rhodes
- Morgan Mo
- Erin Marostica
- Jerry Whalen
- Ann Ingram
- Debbie Eberhardt
- Tyson Oliver

The following comments were received:

- Flag Stats provides skewed and inaccurate information.
- Reduced funding jeopardizes citizen safety.
- By defunding, we would destroy all we have worked for to have a professional department.
- Defunding will drive away good cops who truly love our community; they deserve way more.
- There is more work to do but dismantling police funding is a misguided concept that has been hoisted upon our society.
- Nearly all incidents are a result of non-compliance, perhaps more public outreach that emphasizes compliance.
- The department is already severely limited, there is no need to defund, if anything give more funding for training and recruiting quality officers.
- Defunding will take back up response away from officers.
- Officers will quit and the community will suffer even more.
- The Flagstaff Police Department has nothing but the utmost respect for their community.
- Without officers we would have complete chaos.
- This is the worst time ever to even consider defunding.
- Things can be done better on both sides, defunding is not the answer.
- Increase funding to for competitive pay, increased training, and more tools and resources to keep them and the community safe.
- The police use discretion and it is the type of discretion that is needed.
- More resources for mental health and alternate response is great, just not at the expense of the police department.
- The Flagstaff Police Department is an asset to the community.

Written comments in support of defunding or reducing the Police Department budget were submitted by the following:

- Deirdre Conroy
- Meredith Brown
- Kurt Eklund
- Abigail Gripman
- Mandy Gebler
- Ben Rosenstein
- Eric Dovigi
- Matthew DuPont
- Claire Hardi
- Nicole Cuaz

Written comments in opposition of defunding or reducing the Police Department budget were submitted by the following:

- Lisa Fozz
- Amber Abbott-Farr
- Jamie Bellar
- Bill and Pamela Ashland
- Nik Christian
- Alan St. Germain
- Mike Dunn
- Sharon Sifling
- Nicole Rupe
- Heather Valenzuela
- Kris Dee Faith
- Dave and Linda Seitz
- Matt Hill

- Patrick Ahern
- Karen Butterfield
- Janet Wessels
- Tanner Callan
- Ann Ingram
- Michael Hays
- Jo OConnell
- Barbara and John Church
- Carolyn Potter
- Shalome Almuetti
- Beau Wilson
- Elizabeth Mccassalin
- Brenda Silveus
- Gail Van Deurzen
- Joshua Wear
- Rebecca Cullum
- Marilyn Overend
- Rick Lopez
- Patty Williams
- Alfredo Villa
- Lori
- Kortney Stock
- Clint and Gillian Bleeker
- Rebekah Zink
- Julie Smith
- Doug Townsend
- Kaylee Sandall
- Dr. Sarica Cernohous
- Ben Heap
- Jennifer Prior
- Stephen Randazzo
- Jana Hester
- Larry and Patty Gibbs
- Kellianne Fox
- Michelle Boyer
- Dr. Jay Laura
- Rachel Williams
- Neal Kenmore
- Manuel Martinez
- Levi and Elizabeth Brooks
- Steven and Lindsey Strum
- Cooper Heap
- Kathryn Heap
- Rylie Hatch
- Kristi Hatch
- Eric Carlson
- Sherry Phillips
- Jennifer Graff
- Kevin Plotz
- Rachel Worley
- Dave and Linda Seitz
- Scot and Anita Porter
- John Tewes
- Jennifer Frank

- Doug Hatch
- Kevin Treadway
- Andy Caird
- Todd Martinet

Mayor Deasy stated that police are overworked, and he would like to see police responding to less calls. The Council took the first step in funding an alternate response model, but it is not enough to reduce the calls to the police department. He would like to see a system created where behavioral health specialists respond to behavioral health calls.

Councilmember Aslan stated the police will continue to be on hand and available nearby even when there is an alternate response model up and running. Officers will also continue to be on hand during fire and medical department calls so they can focus on the patient and not on the surrounding scene. He is supportive of continuing the conversation about alternate response models, but it is an evolution that needs a local focus. There needs to be an evaluation of the success of these programs in the community before any drastic measures are taken. The Flagstaff Police Department is already understaffed, under paid, and they are losing officers to other higher paying municipalities. Better resources are needed for the department and he is not interested in defunding.

Councilmember Salas stated that the purpose of law enforcement is to promote public safety and uphold the rule of law so individual liberty can flourish. She is opposed to any reduction in funding or services from the police department. She believes that community policing programs such as Block Watch and Weed and Seed should be reinstated and properly funded. Reducing funding for the Police Department is not the solution to achieving the change that is sought by concerned and frustrated members of the community in response to their concerns over rogue police actions outside Flagstaff.

She stated that the issues in the criminal justice system extend beyond the behavior of police officers. Over the years, reductions in state and federal budgets have slashed funding for mental health services, homelessness, substance abuse and recovery services; offender re-entry programs; educational and vocational training opportunities; and programs that promote economic improvement. Police officers have had to fill this void placing them in difficult situations. There is a need to provide additional resources to social services, education, housing, and mental health services. Fulfilling these needs should not come at the expense of police funding, but rather, provide additional resources given to these areas, and seek funding support from state and federal agencies.

Councilmember Shimoni stated that there is a large population who are disenfranchised from government and it is Council's responsibility to represent them too. The relationship with Flagstaff's indigenous neighbors and people of color has been damaged. There have been promising discussions about funding the alternative response model but there is just not enough funding available and the police budget is not immune to the conversation. Housing is a big issue and it is a better investment to put people into housing rather than spending so much on responding to their crimes time after time. More tools are needed to address community issues.

One of the things he would like to see addressed is the level of service. There are a lot of calls that officers are responding to that are not high priority and other agencies do not respond to similar types of calls. For the wellbeing of officers there needs to be a discussion about reducing the level of service on non-emergency calls. He would also like to address issues at their core rather than continuing to invest in more policing. He feels that having a community response team that can respond to calls rather than police can get people connected to services rather than putting them into the criminal justice system. He is open to a diversion and reallocation of funds; 10% could go a long way in funding solutions.

Councilmember Sweet stated that the Police Department needs additional resources and an alternate response model; they also need a morale boost and help bridging the staffing gap. Funding for those things does not come at the expense of the police, funding should be provided but it needs to be found elsewhere.

Vice Mayor Daggett stated that she is eager to see what an alternate response model can accomplish; responding to calls with compassion, providing access to social services and housing, and keeping people out of the criminal justice system are all good things. Working to address the housing issue is critical, as is mental health care. Not everyone is treated with the same level of respect or equity and that is a community wide problem that needs to be addressed. She stated that she would like to have staff come forward with funding options to consider and discuss.

Councilmember McCarthy stated that it is a polarized issue. He supports the alternate response model and providing funding, but he does not support defunding the Police Department as a mechanism to do so. He is not comfortable with reducing levels of service.

Mr. Clifton stated that the alternate response model has been evaluated, discussed, and vetted by many groups. The pursuit of this was prompted by a well-articulated need independent of the defunding the police discussion. A program will take time to mature and many things cannot be implemented on day one. Things will evolve over time and it will take time, growth, and revision. The funding resources are proposed to be derived from multiple sources including the general fund, the recreational marijuana tax revenues, as well as some COVID relief funding.

Management Services Director Rick Tadder presented a brief PowerPoint presentation on the budget proposal for the alternate response model.

ALTERNATE RESPONSE FOLLOW-UP FUNDING OF ALTERNATE RESPONSE UNIT

Mayor Deasy stated that even with the identified funding they are still not taking the weight off police officers nor taking any calls away from them. Right now, the department is understaffed by 13 positions and ten officers are interviewing in other districts which could present a 20-plus position shortfall. There are not enough recruits to fill those positions, yet the department is allocating dollars to positions that cannot be filled. He suggested that the vacant positions be filled with social workers and behavioral health specialists instead of officers.

Chief Musselman stated that he is optimistic that alternative response can help reduce some of the call volume but not by a lot. The police were called to respond to 855 medical call assists, 145 calls from crisis lines, and over 600 calls for service at the shelter. Terros came on board in November to help with low level mental health calls and there were 1,300 calls but they were only able to respond to 27 alone with the others requiring a police response due to safety concerns. He is concerned about putting social workers and behavioral health specialists in situations where they could get hurt.

Councilmember Shimoni asked if calls for service decreased with the unsheltered populations being housed in hotels during COVID. Chief Musselman stated that arrests did go down. Councilmember Shimoni stated that getting people into housing is key and even though there is not Council support for utilizing the police budget there needs to be continued movement to find solutions to housing unsheltered people.

Mayor Deasy stated that many of the models implemented elsewhere show a 20% decrease in call volume when fully funded. Not every call will become violent and he has a hard time

believing that police need to respond to all calls because something might happen. He stated that a consultant or policy expert is needed to evaluate what it would take in Flagstaff, how to get there, and the dollars needed.

Councilmembers Aslan and McCarthy stated that they cannot make a decision on something like a consultant until they have an understanding on cost and scope. Councilmember Shimoni stated that NAU's Criminal Justice Department could look at it and fund solutions.

Mr. Clifton noted that a request for proposals (RFP) was submitted and proposals are currently being evaluated. Mayor Deasy stated that the RFP was unspecific and did not include a desire to reduce call volume. Deputy City Manager Shannon Anderson stated that call volume was addressed in the RFP and it included a reduction in both police and fire calls. The RFP and scope of work was written in general terms because each responder has their own model and staffing components; they did not want to discourage any sort of response to the RFP. The responders have provided measurements, reporting, and other statistical data so while the scope was broad, the responses have been very specific and addressed how they would help the city response to law enforcement and fire related calls.

Mayor Deasy stated that he was informed that the responses from the RFP would not decrease the call volume. Ms. Anderson offered that what they have seen from other models is that it takes time for the systems to be put into place and for people to know that they can call them, rather than the police, for service.

Vice Mayor Daggett asked when it is expected that the committee will select a response and bring it forward to Council. Ms. Anderson stated that the team is scheduled to have interviews with the respondents on May 12, 2021 and May 14, 2021. The goal of the interviews is to clarify information in the responses, so the team accurately understands what they are reading and evaluating. If they are able to select a respondent after those interviews, they could come back to Council with a contract soon after knowing that funding has been identified.

Councilmember Shimoni stated that more information about Ithaca's efforts can be found at <https://www2.tompkinscountyny.gov/ctyadmin/reimaginepublicsafety>. He encouraged the Council, staff, and the public to look at the information.

Councilmember Aslan stated that it is evident that it will be very hard to reduce the number of situations where police are not showing up to a scene and that should not be the goal. The goal is that while they are there, they are in a background keeping a low profile to allow the experts to do the work they need to do while ensuring scene safety. The goal is to create a new interface for community situations to avoid escalation that can happen. This is something that will change slowly over time. Looking at other places like Ithaca or Eugene, the programs take years to develop with a lot of trial and error involved. Taking police funding to hire social workers is not going to change the number of calls police must respond to.

Mayor Deasy stated that only incremental changes will happen when that is all that is believed to be able to happen. After all this time they are doing nothing more than what they were doing before.

Mr. Clifton acknowledged that the process moves slowly but to remember that they are building an institution and a change in how things are done. A year ago there was not a single dollar allocated toward alternative response and now a year later significant resources have been allocated. It will take time and they will have to learn and adapt from the successes and failures that will come along the way.

Mr. Solomon expressed appreciation for the discussion and noted that the Council should be

aware that there will need to be a significant amount of legal research, vetting, and training to go along with implementation and as the program progresses. As has been discussed, things take time but staff is ready to take on the work as directed by Council.

Mayor Deasy thanked the public, Council, and staff for their participation in the meeting. He stated that it was good discussion with good commentary from the public.

6. Adjournment

The City Council Special Meeting held April 26, 2021, adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

CERTIFICATION

I, STACY SALTZBURG, do hereby certify that I am the City Clerk of the City of Flagstaff, County of Coconino, State of Arizona, and that the above Minutes are a true and correct summary of the Meeting of the Council of the City of Flagstaff held on April 26, 2021. I further certify that the Meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DATED this 7th day of September, 2021.

CITY CLERK