



League of Women Voters of Portland

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Date: February 4, 2022

Dear Chief Lovell:

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Portland, we are writing to commend you and the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) on a number of important initiatives you have recently undertaken that have the potential to have a positive impact on Portland Police Bureau's culture.

As you may know, last year the Portland League completed a study examining the processes of oversight and accountability in the PPB. In June 2021, our board adopted an advocacy position statement, which addressed these issues. It serves as a guide for our action.

A portion of that statement speaks to the critical role of PPB leadership in changing the Bureau's culture:

Changing the culture within the PPB must be a key goal of the bureau leadership. The PPB must end practices that systematically place police in opposition to or in domination of the public, or that treat community members as enemies. Officers should see themselves in partnership with the community in solving problems and should show respect for all individuals and cultures.

Since our statement was published, we have directed our efforts forward in an attempt to identify remaining challenges as well as possible successes. It appears that you and the Bureau have embarked on a positive path that both recognizes shortcomings and begins to act on improving culture. You have taken affirmative steps in looking inward to identify issues that your officers face, as well as outward and towards building positive community relations.

The formation of the Focused Intervention Team (FIT) and the Community Oversight Group (COG) appear to be an effort to form an effective working partnership between some community members and a set of carefully selected officers. Their goal is to reduce shootings and community violence.

While this project is in its initial stages, there are some quite encouraging signs. We are pleased that the COG is meeting weekly with a Bureau captain and two or three other officers are in attendance. Community members played an active role in selecting the officers for the FIT team. FIT members have received 65 hours of training and are now out on the streets.

League of Women Voters of Portland:

To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.

From the meetings we have been able to attend, it appears that both sides are dedicated to finding workable solutions to the very serious problem of increased violence in Portland. They are listening to each other and sharing ideas. They are researching best practices that have been used successfully in other cities to reduce the actual number of shootings. The captain has made it clear that no new programs to reduce gun violence would be initiated unless the community, as represented by the COG, concurred in recommending them. Both the group of new officers and the members of the COG are diverse, representing numerous community voices and perspectives, including members with the tragic lived experience of losing someone in their family to a shooting. At a time when the Bureau has struggled to gain and maintain community trust, these types of programs represent an important opportunity to demonstrate good faith partnership with the community.

Since becoming chief, you have often mentioned the advantages of community policing. We see the FIT-COG as a constructive step in demonstrating that the community and the PPB can work together in order to address a problem that the public sees as extremely urgent. We urge you to ensure that sufficient support and resources are provided to enable this process to continue and grow.

In a recent interview with Assistant Chief Jami Resch, we learned about other programs focused on improving officer morale and bolstering police professionalism that have the potential to result in positive change in the Bureau culture:

- The ABL Program, known as the duty to intervene,
- The wellness program, with encouragement for officers to participate,
- Expansion of the Public Safety Support Specialist program,
- Cooperation with development of the Portland Street Response,
- Hiring an education specialist to guide the Training Division,
- Anti-bias training, and other efforts to fight racism within the Bureau.


The tasks that you and the Bureau face are considerable, with many demands on your time and attention. The League, and other community partners, watch the Bureau's activities closely and recognize that it is important to take time to applaud the positive steps you have undertaken to improve PPB culture. We also hope you will find ways to recognize the employees participating in these initiatives when the data show that positive results have been achieved. These initiatives will benefit the Bureau, its officers and the entire city.

We appreciate your continued dedication to Portland and its residents.

Sincerely,



Debbie Kaye, president
League of Women Voters of Portland



James Ofsink, chair
Justice Interest Group