

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** JUNE 23, 2020

**TO:** MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER

**FROM:** COUNCILMAN SEIFELDEIN, COUNCILMAN CHAPMAN, COUNCILWOMAN JACKSON

**SUBJECT:** 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY PUBLIC SAFETY MODELS IN ALEXANDRIA

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We are fortunate to have capable and professional public safety agencies who provide dedicated service to our residents. As we reflect on the most recent events that have unfolded across our Nation, it's history, and the need for productive and meaningful solutions, even the most successful communities must look inward and strive to improve. As such, it is incumbent upon us to revisit and refine Alexandria's public safety models to ensure that we appropriately serve the public need. We write to you today as representatives of the many Alexandria residents who have expressed their support for the implementation of new 21<sup>st</sup> century public safety models in our City.

As you are aware, at the June 9th Legislative Meeting, City Council unanimously adopted Resolution No. 2950, "Establishing a Community Police Review Board and Condemning Systemic Racism."<sup>1</sup> Among the many initiatives conveyed through this resolution, it expresses that, "the City Council of the City of Alexandria is committed to exploring new 21st century public safety models."

Pursuant to this resolution, we ask that you return to Council within 120 days with *preliminary* findings of new approaches to community safety practices that prioritize unarmed professional's intervention in non-criminal, non-emergency, and non-life threatening 911 calls and service calls.

This is a request to explore creative and innovative public safety models, which may include, but are not limited to:

- alternative approaches that prioritize non-law enforcement responses to homelessness, public gatherings, after-hours construction, noise, and other quality of life complaints;
- the creation of a mobile crisis unit trained in crisis prevention and management such as suicide prevention and intervention, domestic disputes (*see infra*), substance abuse, and other mental wellness calls; and
- budget alternatives as part of the Fiscal Year 2022 budget process.

This proposal should include engagement with all stakeholders including, but not limited to, residents of the diverse populations that we serve, mental health advocacy and service providers, public safety employees and their labor organizations, community advocacy organizations, applicable City Boards and Commissions, Alexandria's judiciary, Alexandria Department of Health, Alexandria Police Department, Alexandria Sheriff's Department, Alexandria Fire Department, Alexandria Commonwealth's Attorney, Alexandria Department of Emergency Communication, Alexandria Department of Community & Human Services, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, and the City Attorney's Office.<sup>2</sup>

Many jurisdictions are exploring<sup>3</sup> or have already adopted safety models<sup>4</sup> that redirect nonviolent and noncriminal calls for service<sup>5</sup> to a mobile crisis intervention unit with trained medics and crisis management professionals. The utilization of a mobile crisis intervention unit will allow first responders to properly assess the situation, use non-life-threatening de-escalation techniques, and provide the resources and assistance best catered to the residents'

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<sup>1</sup> [City of Alexandria. "Resolution Establishing a Community Police Review Board and Condemning Systemic Racism."](#)

<sup>2</sup> We recognize that decriminalizing certain infractions to civil penalties is a critical step to the overall objective but requires concerted State action.

<sup>3</sup> [City and County of San Francisco. "Mayor London Breed Announces Roadmap for New Police Reforms."](#)

<sup>4</sup> [CAHOOTS. "Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets."](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Fairfax County. "Mobile Crisis Unit."](#)

situation. However, we understand that there will be instances that require both law enforcement and non-law enforcement crisis responses (e.g. domestic disputes). In requesting this, we recognize and commend the existing support of the Alexandria Crisis Intervention Team,<sup>6</sup> the City's 24-Hour Crisis Lines,<sup>7</sup> and the many individuals who contribute to the wellbeing of our residents. We also understand that staff's expertise and knowledge will help hone the request to meet the objective of providing non-law enforcement responses to certain situations.

Council is dedicated to ensuring that the varied needs of residents who seek help are met with specialized assistance and proper resources. The City of Alexandria must continue to be a leader by prioritizing support for mental wellness, abuse, and crises.

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<sup>6</sup> [City of Alexandria. "Crisis Intervention Team."](#)

<sup>7</sup> [City of Alexandria. "24-Hour Crisis Lines."](#)