



2020 City Council Candidate Questions

PUBLIC SAFETY

How would you help set policies for PAPD to address racial profiling and use of excessive force?

PAT BURT

[Answer includes both Public Safety questions – this one and “What are your thoughts on “defunding” and/or reorganizing the police department? What changes do you want to see in our police department? If you would cut its budget, where would you apply the savings?”]

I believe we need to invest more in “public safety”, but reform and change our policing models. Some of these investments would supplement or, in some cases, replace certain public safety functions currently responded to by uniformed police officers. It is not clear whether services to be provided by mental health professionals, social service workers or other nonuniformed officers would be administered within the police (or public safety) department.

- Adopt the #8CantWait, reforms as a foundation for improving public safety by reducing the use of force, enhancing transparency, and increasing accountability.
- Renegotiate the police union (POA) contract so that the police Policy Manual is not subject to binding arbitration which has historically limited officer accountability and transparency.
- Adopt a holistic public safety program prioritizing mental health and social service professionals as default city responders to nonviolent mental health, homelessness, and domestic emergency calls.
- Restore the scope of the Independent Police Auditor (IPA) that was reduced in December 2019 so serious internal police misconduct will again be reviewed by the outside IPA rather than the City HR department.
- Proactively work to diversify hiring of police staff, including leadership, and increase our diversity training. In recent years, our staff has become less diverse.
- Track data on policing racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation patterns. Data collected serves as an impartial method for ensuring accountability and tracking patterns and progress.
- Expand community policing initiatives to enhance trust and relationships.
- Explore an exchange program with East Palo Alto for officers to serve on temporary assignments in each other’s cities to build broader diversity training and cultural understanding.

REBECCA EISENBERG

First, I would work to clarify that the PAPD works for the City, and not the reverse.

1. Then, I would make it clear that racial profiling and excessive force are illegal, without exception.
2. I would ensure that officers who violate these policies (and/or 8 Can’t Wait and other demilitarization and de-escalation policies we must implement) will face consequences that will include immediate termination and criminal prosecution if appropriate - the PAPD must not be above the laws it purports to enforce.
3. I would do what I could to revoke the “police bill of rights” as well as other unfair policies that allow police officers to be above the law.
4. I would require that the PAPD terminate all officers with an existing record of racial violence.

5. I would require that the PAPD hand over all evidence related to claims of inappropriate conduct without exception.

LYDIA KOU

PAPD collected data but stopped due to budget cuts, I believe, a decade ago. And that is too bad because collecting data and analyzing it consistently provides information to address racial profiling and excessive force. The question to ask is when budget cuts are made, does the Council have input? If not, why not? All information should be analyzed by the Independent Auditor and presented directly to the City Council, not the City Manager. Mental health professionals should be on call for our police officers as we seek to de-escalation and a reduction in

ED LAUING

[Answer includes both Public Safety questions – this one and “What are your thoughts on “defunding” and/or reorganizing the police department? What changes do you want to see in our police department? If you would cut its budget, where would you apply the savings?”]

On both of these questions, Council is doing good work - so far - on investigating options for police reform and making changes. Quite similar to what I proposed on my website in June, multiple ad hoc committees on council were formed on various aspects of the police department. This is well-coordinated with the parallel work of the Human Relations Commission. Progress is happening based on the multiple report-outs from the ad hoc committees and the HRC. Some reforms have already been put in place such as the elimination of chokeholds. There is more work to be done.

Separately, officers at fault for atrocious behavior have to be fired immediately and blackballed from police work. I would like to see our outside auditor lead such investigations reporting directly to council.

In parallel, I would also like to see a study done on how the city could swap in non-police personnel in-lieu of some sworn officers. This could include civilian social workers, mental health experts, substance-abuse specialists, and first-call responders for neighborhood nuisance calls like excess noise. This staffing adjustment would also reduce overall expense for the city. Other communities, such as Eugene, OR have successfully implemented such an approach; we don't have to reinvent the wheel to achieve it.

STEVEN LEE

As a Human Relations Commissioner I have and will continue as a Council Member to work on greater police accountability, transparency and reform. No group, lest our PAPD, can be realistically expected to reform or hold itself accountable, which is why it's even more important that our council, our HRC and our community play that role. We should all be intimately involved in reviewing and reforming all of our various police policies, collecting and making available to the public statistics and other records to show us how the department and individual officers are performing. We also need to more publicly, more regularly and more quickly audit our PAPD on a wider range of metrics and scenarios -- and ultimately insist on stricter penalties for officers who do not meet our highest community values and standards.

RAVEN MALONE

PAPD has had several issues regarding transparency, racial profiling, and excessive force. Our city budget cannot afford to continue settling excessive force lawsuits, and we need to ensure accountable policing in our city so that all of our residents can truly feel safe. I would work with marginalized communities in Palo Alto who have been disproportionately profiled and the police department to create a shared understanding and more trust in the community. This will allow us to set better policies for everyone.

GREER STONE

As a council member, I will always lead and make decisions from the same social justice lens I have been using for the last 8 years as a Human Rights and Human Relations Commissioner and teacher. And I would make the following proposed changes to our police department.

First, we must enact the 8 Can't Wait reforms not already implemented.

Second, revise our hiring policies to recruit officers with no misconduct allegations.

Third, promote the hiring of more women and minorities. Studies show that when there are more women in police departments the rate of police misconduct, violence, and shootings, precipitously drops.

Fourth, ensure greater transparency and accountability. A well-functioning democracy has to be transparent to be accountable to the public. Law enforcement is no exception.

Fifth, require an independent auditor's reporting of officer complaints rather than the city's own Human Resources Department.

Sixth, require that the police auditor report directly to the city council and have that report be made public within a reasonable timeframe.

And seventh, reimagine community policing by having mental health professionals respond to noncriminal matters.

GREG TANAKA

As a City Council liaison for Palo Alto's Human Relations Commission, I have been afforded the opportunity alongside my colleagues to directly engage with the Black and Brown communities. I acknowledge how crucial it is to effectively and comprehensively address racial profiling and excessive force in Palo Alto. The summary videos my office makes on the HRC meetings highlight both public comments from our residents and conversations between community leaders about creating proactive solutions around these issues. These conversations can be found at [City of Palo Alto: Police Reform](#), [Palo Alto HRC Meeting on Police Reform \(7/22/20\)](#), [City of Palo Alto: Human Relations Commission meeting on 8 Can't-Wait police reform](#), and [Palo Alto HRC Meeting on Police Reform \(7/22/20\)](#). There are many perspectives on what the best course of action is and they all need to be heard. By taking these perspectives, we can effectively bring about long term solutions. I am directly able to help out with this because, since 2017, I have held office hours and have been allowed to hear the many concerns of Palo Alto residents.

CARI TEMPLETON

We must re-envision public safety in such a way that reduces violence in our city overall (including from police) and prevents hate crimes in our community. When officer involved violence does occur, we must hold the officer to account with a full investigation and potentially dismissal or criminal charges, depending on the result of that investigation. We should allocate some of our current public safety funding to alternative public safety measures, such as mental health first responders and social workers to respond to nonviolent situations.

AJIT VARMA

We need to better train police and residents. Public safety is an important need in any city and our high levels of safety make Palo Alto one of the best places to live. We need to ensure we are safe in the future and police play an important role in our city if they are trained properly. I think it's important for our police force to demilitarize and institute 8 can't wait. This means that they are trained in techniques to use non-violent means and have an attitude of helping Palo Alto's citizens and keeping them all safe. We also need to train our residents to use appropriate resources depending on the situation. This means using more community resources and fellow neighbors to deal with minor issues. We can also institute technology to deter crime through a network of video cameras that aid police in non-physical ways of keeping all of us protected.