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City Manager's Office

# Memorandum

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM:** Debra Figone

**SUBJECT: San José Police Department –  
Officer/Public Communications**

**DATE:** November 2, 2012

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## INFORMATION

I am aware that Council offices have been receiving questions and concerns from constituents regarding the diminished capacity of the San José Police Department to respond to reports of burglaries and other property crimes as a result of reduced staffing levels. In addition, constituents have reported occasions when individual police officers in the course of their duties might be communicating inaccurately or inappropriately regarding SJPD policies, City budget issues, or political matters. At the meeting of the Public Safety, Finance, and Strategic Support Committee on October 18, several members of the Committee also addressed this issue during the regular discussion of the Police Department's report on operations and performance.

It is important to recognize the enormous challenges currently facing the Police Department and our officers during this difficult time of severely limited resources and uncertainty about the future. The Department has suffered significant reductions in the number of experienced officers as a result of budget cuts, layoffs, pay cuts, retirements, and separations, and we are currently operating at lower than authorized staffing levels. This situation has led to inevitable reductions in both service levels and response times for lower priority calls, as Chief Chris Moore and his command staff reported at the City Council study session in September. Unfortunately, it has also contributed to increased stress on our officers who continue to do their professional best to serve and protect the people of our community despite these challenges.

Both our officers and our residents are understandably frustrated when the City simply does not have the resources to do all that our community expects from the Police Department. Our residents can become dismayed when they hear responses to their calls for help that might lead them to believe that the City and the Police Department do not care about them or their situation. It is our responsibility to turn this belief around.

Despite these uncertainties, frustrations, and pressures on our officers, I am very proud of their continuing commitment to high standards of conduct and professional procedures for which our Police Department has earned a well-deserved national reputation. I am also very thankful for our officers who have chosen to continue their public service for the people of San Jose during

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these very difficult times. Although individuals might respond to current stresses in ways that do not always measure up to the standards that we expect from all our City employees as we serve the public, for the most part our staff does an excellent job.

The Chief and his command staff continue to emphasize the importance of how officers must communicate professionally, clearly, and consistently with the public. They are striving to provide the leadership and support necessary to ensure that the men and women of the Department continue to achieve this goal. The Chief is also encouraging officers to use departmental resources, such as their sergeants or frontline management, for advice and assistance. In addition, the Department can call upon the Office of Employee Relations, the Independent Police Auditor, and other City resources for guidance when encountering public communications challenges or to confirm current policy or budget matters that affect departmental operations.

Although the Police Department has a fundamental role for public safety, it is very important that we continue to encourage our residents to take steps that can help keep their homes and neighborhoods safe. Active community engagement is one of the best methods for improving safety and reducing crime by enabling neighbors to help each other. Involvement in neighborhood associations and online networks such as Nextdoor; participation in community events such as National Night Out and block parties; and volunteering with Neighborhood Watch and crime prevention programs all can engage and empower our residents to become more alert and more resourceful to help their neighbors and our police officers to protect San José. The Police Department has extensive information on its website ([www.sjpd.org/BFO/Community/Crimeprev](http://www.sjpd.org/BFO/Community/Crimeprev)) about concrete and common sense measures that residents can readily take to reduce their risks of burglary and other crimes. Council offices can provide valuable assistance in this area by sharing this information through your own communications outreach and networks.

Clearly this City has a need for more police resources. However, we must continue to emphasize the fundamental and active partnership between SJPd and our community that is necessary to keep San José safe, especially in light of the ongoing fiscal constraints. Under the leadership of Chief Moore as well as our next chief, we will continue to focus on effective communications, collaborative solutions, and creative innovation that constitute our commitment to maintaining both a safe city and high professional standards in an era of limits.

In this spirit, I ask that you please continue to bring issues of concern to my attention or to Chief Moore's so that we can follow up as appropriate, as well as help our efforts to identify and address policy and training needs.



Debra Figone  
City Manager