

Establishment of the Mayor’s Task Force on Policing Reform

I. Background

It is in the best interest of the City of Houston and its citizens to explore best practices and procedures in operating the Houston Police Department (HPD), particularly in the areas of training, use of force, police oversight, and interactions with the community. As explained in Executive Order 1-67, Policing Reform: Use of Force, “[i]t is the policy of the City of Houston (City) to value and preserve human life by carefully balancing all public interests in connection with vesting police officers with the authority to use lawful, objectively reasonable force to protect the public welfare.” Accordingly, I have determined that creating a task force to study various matters related to law enforcement in the City would be beneficial to addressing community and police relations and re-envisioning certain operations of HPD as our law enforcement officers continue to uphold the high standards I expect them to exemplify and those standards expected by Houstonians and demanded by law.

II. Designation and Purpose

I, the Mayor of the City of Houston hereby create the Mayor’s Task Force on Policing Reform (the “Task Force”). The purpose of the Task Force is to:

1. Review HPD policies and practices relating to use of force (e.g., training, reporting).
2. Review the operation of the IPOB, its effectiveness and recommend what changes, if any, should be made.
3. Body cameras: assess when video footage should or should not be released to general public i.e. criteria.
4. Best practices (model) for crisis diversion (e.g., substance abuse, mental/behavioral issues, homelessness) – evaluate HPD Crisis Intervention Team.
5. Assess how well HPD is doing with community policing and what more should be done to build the bond between police and community.
6. How to decrease the “overt” presence of law enforcement without adversely affecting safety.

The Task Force may recommend to the Mayor additional areas to study. The Mayor may modify, amend, expand, or change the specific charges of the Task Force.

III. Composition

The Task Force shall be composed of members appointed by the Mayor and shall serve at the pleasure of the Mayor. Laurence Payne shall be chairperson of the Task Force. The Task Force shall consist of no less than 21 members and no more than 45 members, including the chairperson. The Task Force shall be composed of the following persons: (see attached list).

Any vacancy on the Task Force shall not affect the powers of the Task Force; and shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

Private sector members (i.e. non-City of Houston employees) of the Task Force will serve as volunteers and without any compensation and will not be entitled to travel expenses, per diem allowances, or reimbursement for expenses.

IV. Subcommittees

The Task Force may, with the Mayor's approval, work through informal subcommittees or other subgroups composed solely of members of the Task Force to consider the topics outlined in the charge. Each subcommittee or subgroup shall report their activities, findings, and recommendations to the Task Force as a whole. The Task Force may modify, ratify, accept or reject, in whole or in part, the recommendations of subcommittees or subgroups.

V. Term

The initial term of the Task Force for the specific charges stated will be for 90 days from July 1, 2020, unless sooner disbanded by the Mayor. The Mayor may extend the term of the Task Force.

VI. Staff Support

At the direction of the Mayor, City staff and other personnel, may provide staff and other resources to support the work of the Task Force, including the City Attorney's Office as well as the active and regular involvement of the Chief of Police of HPD and members of the Houston Police Department. The City will provide the facilities, technology and support staff necessary to conduct meetings of the Task Force.

VII. Meetings

Task Force meetings will be held on a regular and timely basis as determined by the Task Force members. Due to challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, these meetings may be held virtually. Meetings will include members of the Task Force and may include City staff support for the Task Force, as determined by the Mayor. In addition to input at meetings, the Task Force may take input from community members and other stakeholders regarding their charge.

VIII. Final Report

The Task Force shall submit a final report with their assessment, findings and recommendations to the Mayor on or before September 30, 2020. The Task Force report should include practical recommendations, implementation plans and improvement metrics and proposed timelines for achieving such metrics, where applicable.