

November 6, 2022

To: Bellevue City Council
Cc: City Manager Brad Miyake & City Clerk
Fr: Craig Spiezle, resident of Lochleven community in NW Bellevue
Sent via email 11/6/2022

Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis, Councilmembers and City Manager Miyake,

I am asking for your support of the Police and Fire Departments staffing requests including funding a minimum of 18 additional commissioned police officers. This increase will expand the successful pilot of the Community Crisis Assistance Team (CCAT), fund the creation of an Eastlink Transit Police Unit and help address other staffing shortfalls. Bellevue residents have the need to Feel Safe and Be Safe and your support is essential.

Today's Police Staffing is Not Sustainable

Over the past decade the city has experienced a 37% increase in 911 calls. From 2017 to 2021 there has been a 19% increase of crime along with increased policing demands and exponential growth in traffic. Since 2010, the City has enjoyed a population growth over 24%, while employment has increased 19%.

Unfortunately, police staffing has remained relatively flat, with only a 3.3% increase in commissioned officers since 2010, (Figure 1 & 2). Today response times are being strained with the increasing numbers of vertical response incidents at high-rises as high as 600 feet, growing mental health issues, homelessness, aggressive shoplifting and drug related crimes.

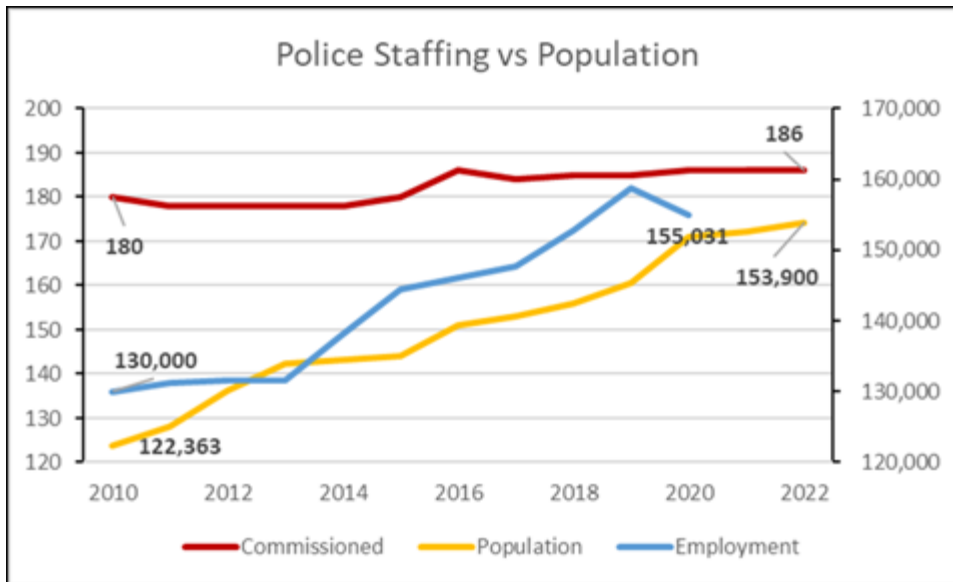


Figure 1 – Source: Public records requests and analysis of the Police annual reports

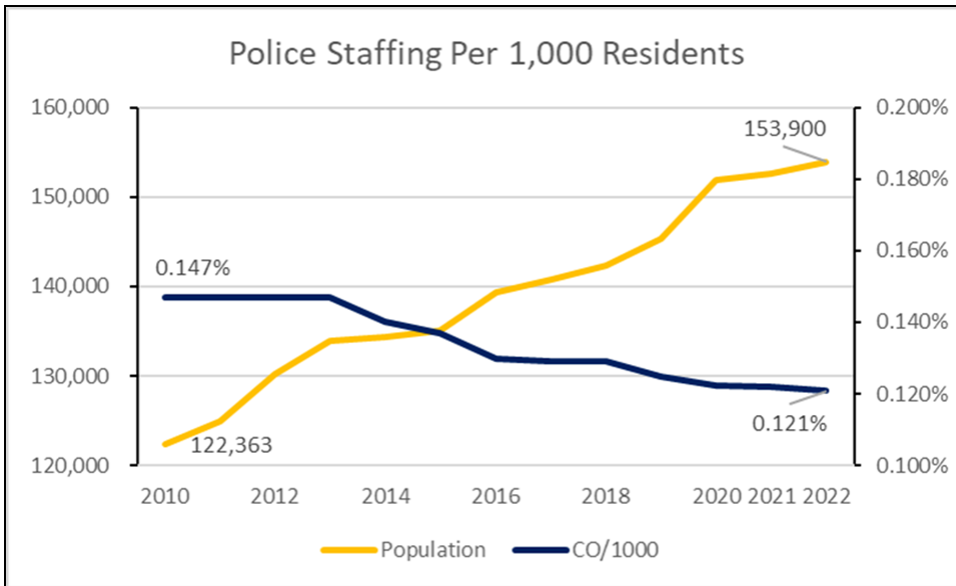


Figure 2 - Police Staffing per 1,000 Residents

Impact of Light Rail

Within the next 18 months the eastside light rail “starter line” to be operational, but today our City is ill prepared with the associated crime which nationally has followed light rail. While today the King County Sheriff’s Office (KCSO) is contracted by Sound Transit to provide police services for transit, KCSO is only staffed at 45% of the original transit plan. Bellevue police have been able to respond to priority 1 transit calls on the average of 3 minutes 38 seconds, while KCSO is frequently unavailable. Bellevue Police have become the de-facto transit police. (Non-priority 1 response times for Bellevue is an average of 7 minutes 42 seconds, see Figure 3). Transit police requires additional training and the City cannot afford to be caught flatfooted to respond to a surge of crime when light rail is operational. Recognizing it takes on the average of 9 to 12 months to train new officers, approval is needed today so the Police department may initiate recruiting, hiring and training.

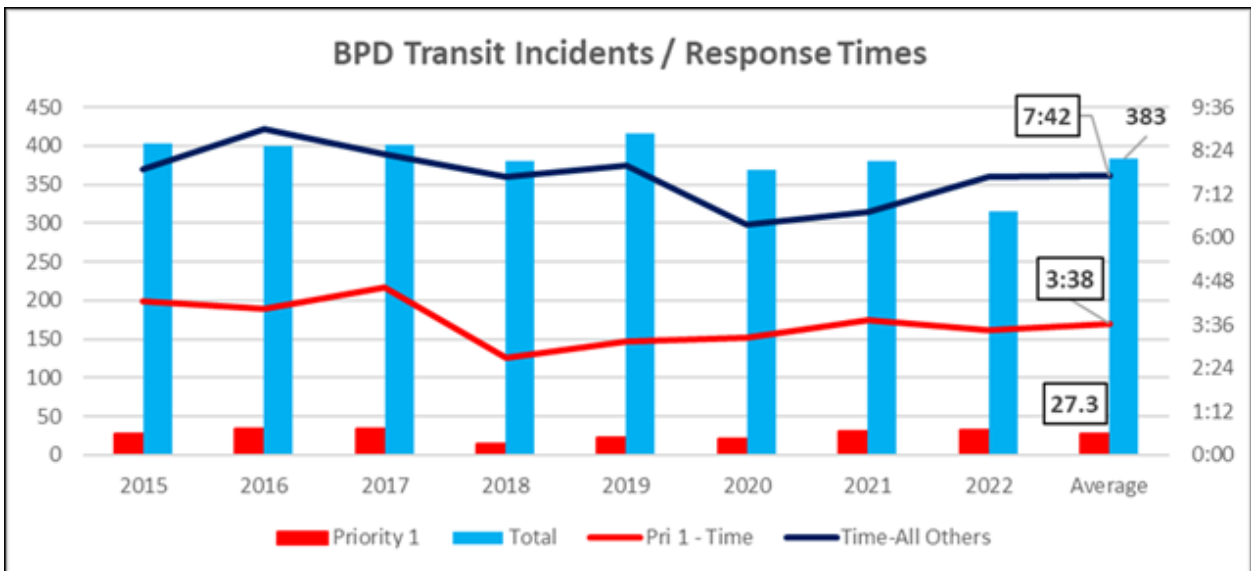


Figure 3- Bellevue Police Response To Transit Calls

Support Public Safety – Cut Other Non-Essential Initiatives

In summary, I encourage Council to support the staffing requirements of the Police and Fire departments while also looking to make other non-essential cuts in the budget. We are facing a recession with the highest rate of inflation in over 40 years. In Seattle and other Cities, sales tax revenue is on the decline and layoffs are increasing.

Combined with the pending County and Park levies, if approved the average home owner in Bellevue will be paying an increase in taxes of \$475 a year. Supporting any additional tax increases further risk taxing residents and businesses out of Bellevue. I ask for your support to direct the City Manager to aggressively scrutinize the proposed City budget for non-essential projects such as the completion of the Grand Connection and pursue “clawing back” funding being provided by Bellevue residents to Sound Transit for KCSO transit to help offset the proposed transit unit.

Voters expect to feel safe and be safe and with your support and working together we can support this need. Thank you for your service and help in making Bellevue a great city to live and work.

Craig Spiezle
Resident of Bellevue
Member Police Advisory Council
Citizen Police Academy – Class of 2022
Community Emergency Response Team – Member
Founder and past President, Lochleven Community Association
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