



## **Social Services and Public Safety Committee**

July 2, 2024

### **Summary and Motions**

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Chair Reynolds called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Committee Members Ellinger, J. Brown, Fogle, Monarrez, Gray, F. Brown, Baxter, Sevigny, and Plomin were in attendance. Council Member Lynch was present as a non-voting member.

#### **I. Approval of May 14, 2024 Committee Meeting Summary**

Motion by Ellinger to approve the May 14, 2024 Committee Summary. Seconded by Baxter. Motion passed without dissent.

#### **II. Recruitment, Retirement, and Retention for Public Safety**

Ken Armstrong, Commissioner of Public Safety, provided an update on Recruitment, Retirement, and Retention for Public Safety. He reviewed recruitment activities and other initiatives for Division of Fire which include increased social media presence; enhanced software; and improved communication and engagement with applicants. There is a focus on physical and mental health with a wellness coordinator, physical fitness standards, and peer support. Other initiatives in the Division of Fire include the Safe Haven Box, Smoke Detector Program, and Hands-Only CPR. Authorized strength in the Division of Fire increased from 597 in 2019 to 622 in 2024. He spoke about attrition numbers which are based on data from January 1 each year and does not necessarily reflect turnover. When reviewing applicant numbers, he said there is one application process for two recruit classes.

Armstrong spoke about police recruitment and retention challenges which include competitive salaries, physical preparedness, and policing. The new workforce values different job benefits and senior personnel are leaving for other jobs in similar fields. Successes include overall increase in applications, utilizing social media, prep courses, and expanding recruiting efforts. Staffing successes include the police retiree program and an update to the age requirement for police candidates. He reviewed staffing levels and said 60-70% make it through the academy. He noted each class requires a separate application process.

Division of Community Corrections recruitment activities and initiatives include social media presence and a new Public Information Officer. They also have advertisements on city buses, local television stations, and an increased presence at job fairs. They communicate with Fort Campbell and Fort Knox advising them of an interest in recruiting veterans who are approaching separation from the military. Division of Corrections has established relationships with the Faith Based community to ask for their assistance in attracting candidates. The Division utilizes *Interview Now*, a software program that allows for the screening of job qualified applicants and contains ease of use communication through text message. Finally, he reviewed the status of collective bargaining agreements for each of the divisions.

When asked how many traffic safety officers there are, Armstrong said there are 20 authorized, 18 on duty, and 4 additional safety officers included in the upcoming budget. To clarify what is meant by "separating veterans", Armstrong said this makes individuals who are ready to leave service with the military aware there are jobs available in Public Safety. For example, there is a Military Police unit at Fort Knox which might be something they are interested in after military service. Armstrong said there are

approximately 300 officers assigned to the Bureau of Patrol and he will review last 5 years to see what this looks like. When asked if we have anything in place for current employees to help recruit or retain officers, Armstrong spoke about the referral program and explained how current officers can be compensated when recruits they bring in are doing well. Speaking about re-hiring retired employees, Armstrong said the Police Department hired 11 retired police officers and they also re-hire retired firefighters and community corrections officers.

Armstrong explained the 11 retired officers were not included in the number of vacancies because they are classified in the Human Resources system as 2 different positions. He described them as being similar to contract employees. When asked about authorized strength, Armstrong said this is the number of sworn positions Council has allocated over the years for each of the divisions. He said authorized strength is not based on anything other than averaging. There was some discussion about the number of vacancies and the impact this has on response times. Brian Maynard, Assistant Police Chief, explained the difference in priority versus non-priority calls. Armstrong added the Lexington Police Department has figured out how to use retired officers or civilians to fill vacancies and this saves about 1,000 personnel hours. No action was taken on this item.

### **III. Eviction Diversion and Right to Counsel**

Charlie Lanter, Commissioner of Housing Advocacy and Community Development began the presentation with an overview and acknowledged community partner involvement. Jonathan Wright, Housing Policy Advisor, spoke about Housing Stability Services as defined by the federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA). This program does all the things you might do to prevent an eviction *except* pay the rent. An opportunity was identified for a smaller targeted program that works closely with a vulnerable population (seniors, families with children, households fleeing domestic violence, etc.). Federal funding was exhausted last year, and they started working with community partners to build up the ability to offer housing stability services. He reviewed forcible detainer cases (eviction cases) filed in Fayette County 2018-2024. 2023 is when changes were implemented to the housing stabilization program to focus on tenants who have active forcible detainer cases which means you couldn't apply for rental assistance last year until your landlord filed an eviction case. This allowed the assistance to be targeted more accurately and effectively because this incentivized landlords to file eviction cases earlier and more often. The number of eviction warrants issued has continued to decrease since 2019. This means they have been able to save about 1,100 families from eviction. Kentucky Equal Justice Center focuses on tenant outreach and education to make sure tenants are aware of their circumstances. Wright spoke about the other assistance available to at risk tenants.

Wright explained the program is doing a good job reaching out to communities of color and the fact that a gap exists shows we have a lot of work to do. This is not a problem these programs can solve overnight by themselves but the fact these programs exist, and they are doing outreach is at least a step in the right direction. If there is a homeless family with a child in FCPS, the school will help them enroll and the McKinney-Vento program will refer families they believe to be eligible for this program to Goodwill. Almost all the families are several steps away from being ready to make the transition into housing. This program was designed to help people through the process and to find sustainable housing they can afford. Wright said the biggest barrier is employment. They have only seen a small number so far reach the point where they are ready to make the transition into housing with the help of financial assistance. When asked about McKinney-Vento, Wright said the first referral came in April 2023. In mid-June, 17 referrals were received from McKinney-Vento to Goodwill. 15 of those families as of mid-June were continuing to work with Goodwill. At that point, 1 of those 17 families successfully found housing. Since then, 2 more families

qualified for assistance and will transition into housing in the next couple of weeks. When asked how many case managers are available to help people with the transition, Jennifer Bergman, a Goodwill representative, said there are 4 career coaches and a program specialist who works with multiple programs. Wright stressed Goodwill is funding the staffing and administrative costs for the McKinney-Vento program 100% and everything LFUCG is funding for that program goes toward paying rent.

No action was taken on this item.

#### **IV. Items Referred to Committee**

No action was taken on this item.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.