



Social Services and Public Safety Committee

July 3, 2025

Summary and Motions

Chair Jennifer Reynolds called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Committee Members Vice Mayor Dan Wu, Council Members Chuck Ellinger II, Tyler Morton, Shayla Lynch, Denise Gray, Amy Beasley, Whitney Elliott Baxter, and Hilary Boone were present. Council Members Emma Curtis, Liz Sheehan, and Dave Sevigny were present as non-voting members.

I. APPROVAL OF JUNE 3, 2025 COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Motion by Baxter to approve the June 3, 2025 Committee Summary. Seconded by Gray. Motion passed without dissent.

II. RECRUITMENT, RETIREMENT, AND RETENTION FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

Scott Colvin, Chief of Division of Community Corrections, began by discussing pay considerations and steps for corrections officers from 2020 to 2025, including a sign-on bonus and recruitment pay. He reviewed initiatives for the Division of Community Corrections. Recruiting initiatives include social media and traditional media efforts, public events, bus ads, 'Interview Now,' and 'Red Tag' platforms designed to streamline the hiring process. For retention, there is a focus on both physical and mental health, personnel training/ development, and employee recognition initiatives. He reviewed staffing levels for the Division of Community Corrections, including authorized strength, vacancies, and attrition. He closed with an overview of the applicant statistics, which have steadily increased since 2021.

Lawrence Weathers, Chief of the Lexington Police Department, discussed pay considerations and steps for the Lexington police officers, excluding those provided by collective bargaining agreements. Recruiting initiatives include physical preparedness and expanding recruitment efforts (hiring individuals aged 20 years and older). Overall, they see an increase in applications. The number of senior personnel leaving for other jobs in similar fields has slowed. There is a focus on both physical and mental health, and technology is utilized to provide opportunities for learning new skills. They also have staffing alternatives, allowing them to rehire retirees, hire civilians to fill clerk positions, increase the number of safety officers to free up traffic officers, and staff the Real-Time Intelligence Center (RTIC). He reviewed staffing levels for the Police Department from 2020 to 2025, which includes authorized strength, vacancies, and attrition. He noted that a new class is set to begin in November.

Jason Wells, Chief of the Lexington Fire Department, discussed pay considerations and steps for Lexington firefighters, excluding those outlined in collective bargaining agreements. Recruiting initiatives include increasing social media presence, enhancing software to manage the application process, and improving communication and engagement with applicants. For retention, they focus on physical and mental health, providing a wellness coordinator, physical fitness standards, and peer support. He reviewed applicant numbers and staffing levels for the Fire Department, and he noted that these numbers fluctuate. He closed by discussing the status of collective bargaining agreements.

When asked how wellness has been effective in reducing attrition, Wells said the Fire Department started with physical wellness. Still, the Police Department and Division of Community Corrections began with

mental health wellness. Weathers said they need another staff person to assist, but the officers appreciate having someone to talk to. When asked about mental health first aid training, Wells said the peer support team goes through international training. Weathers said the Lexington Police Department has a peer-support team that receives training, but they are looking for additional training. Addressing efforts to recruit more females and whether childcare options have been considered, Wells said this is something they have discussed because female firefighters tend to leave when they start a family. They have a progressive reproductive health program, but they have not reached a solution for childcare or a change in scheduling to accommodate this. **No action was taken on this item.**

III. COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Jeanette Hart, Quality Services Manager at the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department, discussed integrating participants' lived experiences from photovoice and co-design strategies to improve access to behavioral health services. We are nationally facing a rise in behavioral health needs (depression, anxiety, etc.). She reviewed barriers in local systems, which include stigma and cultural mistrust, limited transportation options, and a shortage of providers, resulting in longer waiting times. Traditional models often fall short and fail to capture real-world experience. Photovoice is a participatory research method that empowers individuals to capture their lived experiences through photography, using images and narratives to advocate for change. Goals for photovoice include empowerment, advocacy, and systems change.

Photovoice results are based on discussions and feedback received to identify the community's needs. Co-design is a collaborative process where community members, stakeholders, and professionals work together as equal partners to design solutions that meet actual local needs. It emphasizes shared power, mutual respect, and the integration of lived experience to create more effective, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes. There are six steps of co-design: observe and notice, frame, observe and notice (again), reframe, imagine and design, and make and experiment. **No action was taken on this item.**

V. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

Chair Reynolds announced that a special meeting of the Social Services and Public Safety Committee will be held on August 26 at 6:00 p.m. to receive public input on the Sober Living Ordinance. The public input period will be limited to two hours.

The meeting adjourned at 4:24 p.m.