

## **Attachment A**

### **Phoenix City Council Public Safety and Justice (PSJ) Subcommittee Summary Minutes Wednesday, May 7, 2025**

City Council Chambers  
200 W. Jefferson Street  
Phoenix, AZ

Subcommittee Members Present  
Councilman Kevin Robinson, Chair  
Vice Mayor Ann O'Brien  
Councilman Jim Waring

Subcommittee Members Absent  
Councilwoman Betty Guardado

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Robinson called the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee (PSJ) to order at 10:32 a.m. with Councilman Waring present. Vice Mayor O'Brien attended virtually.

#### **CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

Orla Bobo advocated for additional funding towards the Phoenix Fire Department and Police Department.

#### **MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

##### **1. Minutes of the Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee Meeting**

Councilman Waring made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2025, Public Safety and Justice Subcommittee meeting. Vice Mayor O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

#### **INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION**

##### **2. Reappointment of Phoenix Municipal Court Judge and Chief Presiding Judge**

Councilman Waring made a motion to recommend reappointment of Phoenix Municipal Court Judge Alex Navidad for a four-year term. Vice Mayor O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

Councilman Waring made a motion to recommend reappointment of Phoenix Municipal Court Chief Presiding Judge B. Don Taylor III for an annual term. Vice Mayor O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

##### **3. Approval of the Neighborhood Block Watch Oversight Committee's Recommendations for the 2025 Grant Program Awards**

Assistant Police Chief Jeff Benza, Neighborhood Services Director Spencer Self, and Assistant Human Services Director Nichole Ayoola presented on this item.

Assistant Chief Benza provided an overview of the Block Watch Program, noting Phoenix voters approved the Neighborhood Protection Ordinance in October 1993. During that time, the Neighborhood Block Watch Grant Program (NBWGP) Oversight Committee was established to solicit, evaluate, and recommend grant proposals for funding to the Mayor and City Council. In April 1994, the City Council adopted the format and guidelines for this process. The membership of the Oversight Committee can consist of at least 10 members but no more than 20 and currently holds the following composition: two Phoenix residents recommended by each member of the City Council, the President of the Phoenix Block Watch Advisory Board or their designee, and the Police Chief or their designee. Chief Benza stated the goal of the Block Watch Grants is to enhance safety and quality of life through the empowerment of community groups, as well as provide resources to create new and innovative programs and activities to prevent and reduce crime.

Moreover, Chief Benza stated program eligibility requires the applicant be a neighborhood block watch group or neighborhood organization. Additionally, homeowner associations, educational or faith-based organizations, and City Departments may apply as a co-applicant group. Further, Chief Benza stated the 2025 Grant Application Process was open from November 1, 2024 to December 5, 2024. The scoring criteria consists of crime prevention/quality of life factors (50 percent), budget evaluation (20 percent), community involvement (20 percent), and project viability/feasibility/ability to complete the project (10 percent). The minimum score required to be considered for funding should total at least 5.25 out of 10. There was a total of 177 applications received and 171 were recommended for funding. He noted the Oversight Committee voted to request an increase in funding for the NBWGP from \$2,000,000 to \$2,154,711 annually.

Councilman Waring asked if training or advice is provided for those who applications did not meet the scoring criteria.

Chief Benza confirmed a grant coordinator assists those groups require additional guidance.

Mr. Self provided an update on the Gated Alley Program, noting that the City Council allocated \$3 million in Block Watch Funds to support the program over a two-year period. As of May 7, 2025, a total of 166 alley segments have either been gated or are currently in progress, with an additional 48 new requests submitted. He anticipates that the full \$3 million will be allocated by August 2025. Mr. Self highlighted the program's significant impact, including an increase in monthly gated alley requests from 15 to 25, a 15 percent reduction in overall calls for service, and an 11.4 percent decrease in violent calls. Notably, the 1,000th gate was installed in March.

Mr. Self requested \$2.25 million of the NBWGF annually contingent on fund availability which would allow approximately 200 alley segments to be gated each year. He added

this would help meet growing demand, enhance public safety, and reduce calls for service.

Ms. Ayoola presented on the proposed Youth Prevention Pilot Program. According to the 2023 American Community Survey, youth aged 5 to 19 make up 24.1 percent of the City of Phoenix's population, totaling 391,964 individuals. She added according to the Phoenix Police Department Crime Reduction Plan issued in 2024, there was a total of 985 arrests in 2023 which included aggravated assault, weapons, robbery. The offenses impacted the neighborhoods of Maryvale, South Phoenix Alhambra, and Central City. Ms. Ayoola provided various reasons for why prevention is important. These include reducing crime which in turn make neighborhoods safer, saves law enforcement, reduces incarceration and rehabilitation costs, empowers at risk youth with education and mentorship, strengthens family and community bonds, and ensures the health and prosperity of communities.

Ms. Ayoola shared the proposed prevention program areas include violence prevention, substance abuse prevention, after-school enrichment, mental health services, dropout prevention, family support, and youth empowerment. Additionally, the program areas can lead to the execution of the program area impact goals: decrease juvenile offenses, gang activity, and violent crime, prevent substance abuse related criminal activity, diversion through engagement, address untreated mental health issues, reduce chronic absenteeism, and keep youth out of the criminal justice system. Lastly, if the funding is approved, the next steps will include assessing local needs and identifying the most effective programs for implementation in Summer 2025. This will be followed by a solicitation for evidence-based program designs in Fall 2025, contracting with community-based organizations in January 2026, and evaluating program outcomes in January 2027.

Chief Benza outlined the staff recommendations which includes fully funding 158 applications and partially funding 13. The recommendations also propose increasing the annual budget for the Neighborhood Block Watch Grant Program from \$2,000,000 to \$2,154,711; allocating \$2.25 million annually for the Gated Alley Program, contingent upon fund availability; and setting aside \$500,000 in Block Watch funds for the Youth Prevention Program Pilot.

Apolonia Morales asked for guidance in submitting an application for the NBWGP.

Councilman Waring made a motion to approve the Neighborhood Block Watch Oversight Committee Recommendations for the 2025 Grant Program Awards. Vice Mayor O'Brien seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

#### **4. AZ Justice Project**

Arizona Justice Project Executive Director Lindsay Herf and Strategic Litigation Counsel Hope Delap presented on this item.

Ms. Herf explained the role of the Arizona Justice Project is a nonprofit organization dedicated to exonerating the innocent and correcting cases of manifesting justice. She stated the presentation is intended to provide eyewitness identification best practices and recommendations and aims to ensure that the collection and preservation of eyewitness evidence is as accurate and reliable as possible, while also minimizing the risk of misidentification. The recommendations are based on research conducted by experts in the field.

Ms. Delap began by clarifying the distinction between a "culprit," who is the actual perpetrator of the crime, and a "suspect," who is the individual under police investigation and may or may not be the culprit. She then outlined the first six recommended best practices.

The first recommendation calls for a pre-identification procedure interview. Officers should conduct cognitive interviews using open-ended questions and should interview the witness as soon as possible after the crime occurs. This allows for timely documentation of the suspect's description and the surrounding environment. At the end of the interview, witnesses should be provided with clear direction on the next steps.

The second recommendation requires that evidence-based suspicion be established before including an individual in a lineup. There must be articulable, documented grounds suggesting that the individual matches a specific description given by the eyewitness, rather than a general one.

The third recommendation advises that only one suspect be included in each lineup. The suspect's position should vary with each lineup or photo array to avoid any unintentional patterns.

The fourth recommendation concerns the use of lineup fillers. It calls for five non-suspect individuals to be included in each lineup to prevent the actual suspect from standing out. New fillers should be used if the same eyewitness views another lineup including the same suspect.

The fifth recommendation is to implement a double-blind procedure, meaning neither the eyewitness nor the lineup administrator knows who the suspect is. If this is not feasible, an alternative "blinded" method should be used to ensure the administrator cannot see which lineup member is being viewed, thus avoiding any influence on the witness's choice.

The sixth recommendation states the importance of avoiding pre-lineup instructions that could bias the witness. The lineup administrator should not imply that the culprit is present or suggest that someone in the lineup has been arrested. Instead, they should inform the witness that the suspect may or may not be in the lineup, that it's acceptable to respond with "I don't know," that their confidence level will be asked, that clearing

innocent individuals is just as important, and that the investigation will continue regardless of the identification outcome.

Ms. Herf continued with the remaining recommendations.

The seventh recommendation is to immediately obtain and record a confidence statement from the eyewitness after an identification decision is made.

The eighth recommendation warns against showing the same suspect to a witness more than once as this can contaminate the witness's memory and increase the risk of misidentification.

The ninth recommendation advises that witnesses be separated during the process and be instructed not to discuss the case with one another. The suspect's position should also vary across different lineups.

The tenth recommendation calls for video recording the entire identification procedure to preserve a clear and complete record of the process and statements made by the witness.

The eleventh recommendation is to avoid "show-up" procedures which is a file or one-on-one identifications involving the presentation of a single suspect to a witness without any fillers. If such procedures must be used, safeguards should be in place to minimize risk.

The twelfth recommendation proposes sequential lineups, where individuals are shown one at a time, and simultaneous lineups be used. While the Arizona Justice Project and other experts do not take a definitive stance on which method is best, both are recognized as valid depending on context.

Chairman Robinson asked whether any police departments have fully implemented all twelve recommendations.

Ms. Herf stated that based on the Arizona Justice Project's research and public records requests, no agency in the state has yet adopted the full set of recommendations. However, several have implemented some of them.

Chairman Robinson asked if any specific recommendations stand out as particularly critical.

Ms. Herf highlighted the importance of Recommendation 5, emphasizing that double-blind procedures are essential to preventing unintentional influence. She also stressed the value of Recommendation 8, which aims to prevent the overuse of the same suspect and the risk of wrongful convictions.

Ms. Delap added that she considers Recommendation 2 especially significant, noting that failure to require evidence-based suspicion is now recognized as a major risk factor for wrongful convictions. Previously, a major risk was cross-racial misidentification.

Chairman Robinson asked the presenters to define cross-racial misidentification.

Professor Laura Smalarz, Associate Professor of Forensic Psychology at Arizona State University, explained that this occurs when an eyewitness and the suspect are of different races. Research shows that people are generally less accurate when identifying individuals of other races compared to their own.

Professor Smalarz also stated the recommendations are interdependent and most effective when implemented together, as they complement each other to form a comprehensive framework.

Chairman Robinson expressed his commitment to ensuring that the Phoenix Police Department becomes a model of best practices in law enforcement. He requested that staff develop a timeline to assess the department's current alignment with the recommendations.

Chairman Robinson asked what kind of training will be provided to support the implementation of the recommendations.

Ms. Herf responded that she envisions statewide training programs, followed by collaboration with individual agencies to implement the best practices effectively.

### **INFORMATION ONLY**

#### **5. Phoenix Police Department Recruitment, Hiring and Attrition Update**

Information only. No councilmember requested additional information.

Teresa Hill expressed appreciation for the support that has gone into addressing hiring and recruitment efforts. She advocated for additional funding towards public safety.

#### **6. Community Assistance Program (CAP) Expansion Implementation Report**

Information only. No councilmember requested additional information.

#### **7. Phoenix Fire Department Staffing and Response Time Update**

Information only. No councilmember requested additional information.

### **CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

None.

### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Robinson adjourned the meeting at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Destiny Dominguez  
Management Fellow

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