



What We Need in a New Police Chief

November 1, 2017

Albuquerque is at a critical juncture. Crime is on the rise. But we have a police department that still hasn't remedied a "pattern and practice" of excessive use of force that three years ago caused the U.S. Department of Justice to intervene and force reforms upon the department. For the safety of both our citizens and our police officers, Albuquerque needs the Albuquerque Police Department (APD) to come into compliance with DOJ-mandated reforms as quickly as possible.

APD Forward is a coalition of 18 community groups and family members of police shooting victims that is committed to holding the City and APD leadership accountable to the DOJ-mandated reforms. Although APD has made noteworthy progress, the current mayor and police chief have failed to provide the leadership necessary to fix serious issues around accountability, transparency, and a lack of supervision. These reforms are absolutely critical in order to transform APD into the professional, community-oriented department that our city deserves.

Thankfully, it's an election year, and the two remaining candidates for mayor have both vowed to select a new APD chief. APD will soon have a new start on reforms and an opportunity to finally fulfill its promise to truly protect and serve all of Albuquerque's diverse communities.

To guide the new mayor in selecting a capable chief, APD Forward consulted experts from around the country about the most important qualifications for a police chief who is charged with reforming use of force practices in his or her department. In addition to the criteria described below, the new chief must exhibit a firm commitment to adopting the reforms mandated by the settlement agreement between the City of Albuquerque and the U.S. Department of Justice. The new chief must publicly acknowledge the resistance APD leadership has shown to date toward key aspects of reform. Above all, the new chief must vow to collaborate and cooperate with the Independent Monitoring Team charged with monitoring the department's progress in reform, a relationship that has often been fraught with tension.

It's a new day for Albuquerque, and it must be a new day for our police department. Although a new chief can't reform the department singlehandedly, picking the right chief will put the department on track to embrace the kind of top-to-bottom culture change that it so desperately needs.

The ideal candidate for APD chief will possess the following qualities:

1. Experience leading institutional reform efforts within a law enforcement agency, including specific instances in which the candidate played a critical role in disciplining officers for violations of use of force policies and procedures.
2. A history of addressing crime while adhering to 21st century policing best practices¹ and Police Executive Research Forum policies, including de-escalation tactics and diversion programs.
3. A track record of demilitarizing a law enforcement agency by rejecting offers of military equipment through federal programs, and by implementing best practices in the use of specialized units such as SWAT.
4. A track record of embracing meaningful and vigorous civilian oversight of law enforcement, including the ability of a civilian oversight agency to develop police policy, independently investigate complaints against officers, and impose discipline following officer misconduct.
5. Experience working with immigrant communities, including a demonstrated commitment to support U-Visa and VAWA applications, not honoring Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainers, abstaining from the federal 287(g) program, and, in general, not using local police resources for federal immigration enforcement.
6. A track record of working collaboratively with diverse communities and holding officers accountable for searching, detaining, arresting, surveilling or taking any other law enforcement action because of a person's perceived mental illness, disability, race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, language, wealth, homelessness, or immigration status.
7. A history of advocating for smart justice initiatives that reduce incarceration, improve conditions of confinement and emphasize rehabilitation, thereby reducing recidivism.
8. A demonstrated commitment to transparency and protecting the public's right to know, especially through expanded data collection and disclosure and reporting of use of force incidents, the use and deployment of surveillance technology, the use of body cameras, and confirmed incidents of police misconduct.
9. Demonstrated commitment to protecting the right of free speech and protest, including prohibiting officers under the candidate's command from engaging in mass arrests and conducting surveillance on law-abiding protesters.

¹ See "Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing" (May 2015)

10. A track record of guaranteeing the rights to due process, legal counsel, and being secure against unreasonable searches and seizures, illustrated by issuing strong policies, developing law enforcement training, creating meaningful oversight, and holding officers accountable so they will not stop someone without reasonable suspicion or arrest someone without probable cause.

It's important that all candidates for police chief be asked to provide concrete examples of the above qualifications. Acceptable candidates may not possess all of the criteria listed above, but a solid candidate will be capable of providing descriptions of their direct experience with most of these items. In the case of those criteria with which they don't have direct experience, a qualified candidate will be able to provide a thoughtful answer demonstrating a commitment to the implicit values associated with the specific criterion.

The APD Forward Coalition consists of the following organizations and individuals:

Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless	National Association of Social Workers – NM Chapter
American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico	Native American Voters Alliance
Common Cause New Mexico	New Mexico Conference of Churches
Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women	New Mexico Criminal Defense Lawyers Association
Disability Rights New Mexico	Street Safe New Mexico
El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos	Strong Families New Mexico
Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande	Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico
Equality New Mexico	Fabrizio Bertolotti, former Police Oversight Task Force member
La Mesa Presbyterian Church	Kenneth Ellis II – father of Kenneth Ellis III
League of Women Voters of Central New Mexico	Michael Gomez – father of Alan Gomez
	Stephen Torres – father of Christopher Torres

