

March 21, 2018

Dear Mayor Carter and Chief Axtell,

We are a citywide group of individuals and organizations working to advance police accountability, community-defined safety, and racial justice. After extensive research, careful analysis of the new SPPD draft use of force policy, many hours attending and hosting the SPPD community meetings, organizing independently, and meeting with Chief Axtell and the department, **we remain concerned that the current version fails to adequately adopt national best practices and accurately reflect the expertise of the communities most impacted by policing.**

We recognize the significant changes have been from the old policy, and appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback to the department. The improvements to the most current version reflect some of our feedback, and speak to the benefits of working with community. However, deeper engagement is still needed and **we do not believe the current version of the policy does enough to limit unnecessary use of force, restrict deadly force, or require reasonable use of de-escalation tactics.**

To ensure better outcomes for communities and officers, we ask that revisions of the SPPD policy:

- produce **current data**, broken out by individual officer and race and gender of individual, on use of force to inform the policy and improve data collection and reporting moving forward;
- create a **working group** representative of the communities most impacted by policing to provide ongoing and structured feedback on use of force policies, practices, and data;
- and **incorporate revisions and guiding principles** to use of force policy based on data and work group input.

Data confirms what communities experience—SPPD has a problem with use of force. Among jurisdictions with relatively low murder rates, St. Paul (3.69 homicides per 1,000,000) has one of the highest rates of police killings. SPPD's police homicide rate, 9.18 police killings per 1,000,000 population, is more than double the national average (3.95 per 1,000,000), and higher than places like New York, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Boston and Pittsburgh. St. Paul's police homicide rate for black victims is 2.5 times (20.4 per 1,000,000) the national rate of police homicide rate of black victims (8 per 1,000,000). Nationally, black people are 3 times more likely to be killed by police than white people. And our research shows that of the 22 police killings that have occurred since 2004, nearly half (10) involved persons armed with weapons other than firearms.

We, the undersigned community groups and stakeholders, do not believe the current use of force policy draft is strong enough in several areas, especially compared to use of force policies in other cities. We strongly recommend that SPPD policy fully adopt the 30 guiding principles identified by the [Police Executive Research Forum](#). Minimally, our proposed revisions to policy include but are not limited to, the following:

- Hold SPPD to higher standards in the deadly use of force, **require that reasonable alternatives be exhausted before resorting to lethal force**, and specify that officer conduct leading to deadly force will be included in the analysis of its reasonableness and necessity: (Cleveland, Las Vegas, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Maplewood, International Association of the Chiefs of Police, and the Police Executive Research Forum); Prohibit shooting at a moving vehicle (New York);
- **Require de-escalation when reasonable**, make restraint the default, clarify skills involved, and outline where use of force is prohibited (e.g., against individuals already restrained, for verbal statements alone, etc.) (Cleveland, Phoenix)
- Adopt **principles of necessity and proportionality**, and specify that in cases where force is employed, **only the minimum degree of force that is necessary shall be employed** (Buffalo, San Francisco);
- Expand strategies and responses for **mental health and crisis response**, including requiring a team approach/CIT when possible, prohibiting responses that escalate the situation, and prohibiting the use of deadly force on individuals who are threat only to themselves (last ask on deadly force adopted has been adopted in the newest version of the policy in response to community feedback)(San Francisco, PERF);
- Acknowledge historic and ongoing harm to communities of color and native people, and **outline a commitment to bias-free policing and fairness in use of force.**
- Release current data, and improve collection and sharing of **disaggregated data on use of force.**

We urge you to incorporate our suggestions, establish a working group, and produce data to promote better outcomes for community and police officers on this critical issue.

Organizations:

ACLU of Minnesota

Advocates for St. Paul Youth and Families

American Friends Service Committee

The Circle of Peace Movement

Communities United Against Police Brutality

Foster Alum Minnesota

Frogtown Neighborhood Association

InEquality

ISAIAH

James Dewitt Yancey Foundation MN

Jewish Community Action

L.I.F.T. (Lifting Individuals and Families Together Out of Poverty)

NAACP St. Paul

The New North

Omega Zulu's Twin Cities MN (Zulu Union)

Showing Up for Racial Justice

St. Paul Accountability and Advocacy Coalition

St. Paul Promise Neighborhood

S.T.A.N.D UP (Standing Together and Never Divided UP)
Summit University Planning Council
Unity Church-Unitarian
West Side Community Organization