

CHIEF OF POLICE JOB SEARCH: A PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY (AS OF JANUARY 25, 2022)

OVERVIEW

Mayor Kincannon has invited and sought input and perspective from a diverse set of community members and local leaders to inform her search for a high-quality, qualified Chief of Police for the City of Knoxville. The focus of this input has generally been centered around two key questions:

What are the most important qualities and characteristics to seek in the next police chief?

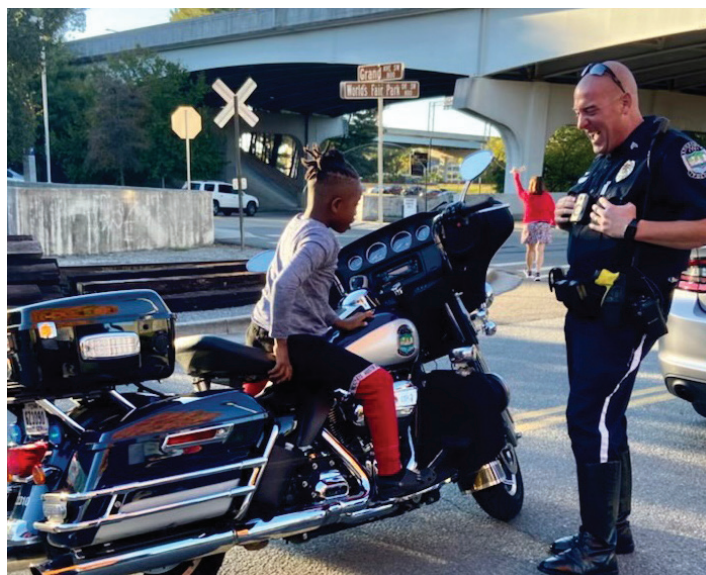
What are the top priorities that the new chief will need to be prepared to address?

With support from City staff as well as outside facilitators, Mayor Kincannon gathered -- and continues to gather -- input through a variety of formats, including a series of public input sessions, group conversations, emails to ChiefSearch@knoxvilletn.gov, written surveys & comment forms, as well as numerous one-on-one conversations.

In addition to receiving input from residents from all over the City and from KPD officers, Mayor Kincannon has had conversations with City Councilmembers, current and former KPD leadership staff, leaders from numerous institutional, non-profit and community-based partners, local pastors, business owners, and members of various City-led advisory boards and commissions, among many others.

All input received through these various strategies will help inform Mayor Kincannon as she evaluates applicants to identify those who best meet the needs and priorities of the local Knoxville community. Public input can also help prospective candidates better understand the needs, priorities, and expectations that Knoxville community members have for the next chief of police.

While conversations with individuals and groups remain



ongoing, input received already has helped inform the creation of the official job description and position announcement for the Chief of Police, which began circulation on January 25, 2022.

This summary reflects input received to-date, and may be updated periodically to reflect additional themes or areas of perspective not previously captured.

COMMON THEMES: QUALITIES TO SEEK IN THE NEXT CHIEF

Leadership Experience

By and large, input strongly emphasized the need for a chief with robust experience navigating and leading teams responsive to the complexities of modern policing. Many people specifically indicated that the new chief should have direct law enforcement leadership experience, with some emphasizing a need to seek candidates who have served in numerous law enforcement roles, including as a patrol officer. Some cited a desire to attract a chief with an advanced degree; others suggested military experience.

The need to demonstrate strong leadership and management experience was widely referenced, with many people articulating that the new chief will need to be well-qualified to develop and champion a vision and strategy for KPD, while establishing the organizational management structure and systems within the department to achieve success. A desire for a chief that proactively addresses various challenges, as opposed to taking a more reactive response when something goes wrong, was a common theme.

Some people advocated for candidates who have experience in and strong familiarity with Knoxville, including internal KPD candidates. Others expressed a preference for external candidates who have worked successfully in comparable environments and can bring new perspectives without being hindered by past history within the local department.

While some people requested the new chief represent a specific demographic (i.e., African American, male/female) or even suggested specific names, most expressed a desire simply to find the best possible person for the job.

Relationship-Building & Accessibility

The desire for a chief who focuses on internal and external relationship-building was also a common theme. Many people expressed the sentiment



that the police chief should be visible and known throughout the community and across neighborhoods, and should prioritize building relationships and collaborating with diverse community representatives and groups. Others suggested that the chief should also encourage officers to do the same, and some offered specific suggestions related to youth/resident engagement opportunities, foot patrols, and other ways to foster more personal connection between officers and residents.

Several participants cited a desire for the new chief to demonstrate empathy, and to be a consensus builder in order to gain buy-in and partnerships for new strategies.

Multiple people raised the need for cultural awareness and responsiveness to facilitate relationship-building, emphasizing that candidates should have worked in a diverse community and workforce and be committed to making sure that people feel heard and respected within the policing process, regardless of background. Similar themes included the need for understanding of and respect for the diversity of the local community, as well as acknowledgement of past and present racial disparities.

COMMON THEMES: QUALITIES TO SEEK IN THE NEXT CHIEF

Transparency & Communication

Many people identified that the next chief should demonstrate a commitment to transparency, and prioritize building open and honest relationships, both internally with KPD officers & staff, as well as in the community more broadly.

Effective communication skills were frequently mentioned as a top qualification, with many people desiring to find a chief who is a good listener, who communicates proactively both internally and externally, and is willing to engage in dialogue and information sharing – both when things are going well and when there are problems or issues.

A recurring theme was appreciation for an approach wherein both good and bad issues are addressed head-on and transparently; this type of open communication was cited as one way the new chief can help build and maintain community trust and respect for the department.

Integrity & Accountability

Honesty and integrity were consistently raised as top qualities to seek in the new chief by both officers and members of the public.

Several people cited a desire for a chief who is committed to firmly and fairly enforcing laws, including rules that govern policing, such as KPD's Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics. Another common theme was the need for the new chief to demonstrate confidence, integrity, and fortitude in making and communicating decisions, regardless of political pressures. Others referenced the importance of being able to acknowledge poor decisions or bad outcomes and take steps to correct the situation.

Many participants expressed the need for candidates to demonstrate success promoting a culture of accountability. Some focused on the need for

internal accountability at all levels, and the need for a chief who enforces excellence and accountability amongst officers, especially on issues of racism, sexism, excessive force, and other inappropriate conduct. "Zero-tolerance" was sometimes referenced as a specific approach to accountability. Others emphasized the need to pursue strategies that promote external accountability to the community, including suggestions for structured processes to ensure independent investigations in cases involving law enforcement and increased engagement of PARC, among others.

Commitment to Policing Best Practices and Innovation

There was broad recognition among respondents that policing as a profession has evolved in the 21st century, and that the next chief should be committed to modern policing best practices that can help build and maintain legitimacy of the department within the Knoxville community. Many specifically referenced a desire for a chief that is open-minded to seeking and trying new data-driven strategies and programs to address challenges, including non-traditional solutions and approaches that do not necessarily incorporate law enforcement. Specific areas mentioned as potentially benefiting from innovative responses included homelessness, mental health, drug use/addiction, and school security, among others.

COMMON THEMES: TOP ISSUES THE CHIEF WILL NEED TO ADDRESS

Officer Recruitment & Retention

Input reflected a broad awareness and concern that KPD does not have enough police officers and is operating below authorized force. For some residents, this has translated to a feeling of not feeling safe in the City, and several people expressed frustrations that calls made to 9-1-1 were not followed up on by an officer as quickly as expected.

Concerns regarding poor morale among officers, as well as lagging salary & benefits were frequently-cited. Both KPD staff and members of the public routinely acknowledged that KPD officers are tasked with enormous responsibility and that many high-quality officers and potential candidates either do not apply or leave the department due to compensation not being competitive with other professions or even other agencies. Many people identified the need to address these morale and compensation challenges as a top priority.

Even as many people expressed the need to recruit and support additional officers, many also acknowledged the importance of attracting, retaining and promoting high-quality officers, and not sacrificing quality for quantity. The desire to see a police force that more closely reflected the demographic diversity of the Knoxville community was a recurring sentiment, with some people specifically emphasizing the need for more Black and minority officers and KPD leadership staff.

Response to Violent Crime

Multiple people expressed concerns about the increased number of homicides and shootings that have taken place in recent years and emphasized that solving murders and fighting crime, including addressing gang-related violence, should be top priorities for the new chief of police. Some expressed appreciation for the recently created Community

Engagement Response Team (CERT), as well as other specific KPD units, and acknowledged awareness of KPD's success in recovering illegal guns, solving murders, and responding to the specific needs of locations experiencing crime spikes.

Some participants expressed support for new types of community-based programs and initiatives that are used in other cities to complement law enforcement functions in order to proactively prevent violence from occurring. Others emphasized the need for effective strategies to better address specific categories of violent crime, including domestic violence, gang violence, and drug-related violence.

Response to Homelessness

The growing population of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and how police interact with these individuals was very frequently mentioned as a top concern. Some people raised concerns specifically about growing safety and crime impacts associated with concentrated homelessness, especially downtown, and expressed a desire for more visible, proactive, and consistent enforcement of laws related to drug use/sales, sex trafficking, theft and other criminal activity. Other people emphasized the need for innovative partnerships and programming, some of which are not reliant on law enforcement officers, to respond to the unique needs of people experiencing homelessness, with a focus on connecting individuals with resources that can provide longer-term solutions.

Community Relations and Engagement

There was wide support articulated for the principles of community policing, and strategies focused on building personal, trusted connections between officers and residents across City neighborhoods. Multiple participants expressed appreciation for the relationships they have built with specific officers, and

COMMON THEMES: TOP ISSUES THE CHIEF WILL NEED TO ADDRESS

others indicated that generally speaking, KPD has successfully established strong relationships between officers and residents/neighborhoods.

That sentiment was not universal, however, and others observed that officers and the chief are not visible and accessible enough in communities. Several respondents expressed concerns that there are limited or ineffective relationships with community partners.

An often-cited concern related to a culture of racism and sexism within KPD, with some people asserting that it is a real problem, and others suggesting the problem may be one of perception. Regardless, many people cited these concerns as a top issue that is undermining public trust and that the Chief will need to acknowledge and face head-on.

Several participants cited concerns related to systemic racism surrounding policing in general. Some articulated how these concerns manifest locally, with particular reference to concerns related to instances of over-policing, officer misconduct, inappropriate use of force, and treatment of people in police custody.

Some people also advocated for new types of partnerships and strategies that could address challenges such as mental health or other non-criminal activities in ways that do not require a traditional KPD response. While a handful of people suggested that such programs should be funded by reducing the police budget, a majority of people who expressed support for new, non-traditional approaches also indicated that funding for such programs should be in addition to – and not replace – funding for KPD.

Officer Training

KPD's training was cited multiple times as a strength and success of the department – with acknowledgement that Knoxville is known as a regional leader for its high-quality training academy.

However, many public participants expressed a desire that KPD expand training on specific topics that can help improve community relationships and help ensure that all officers understand and model policing best practice. Specific training topics mentioned include diversity & cultural competency, bias, domestic violence, sexual harassment, de-escalation, and crisis intervention, among others.

Other related themes mentioned include a need to teach and enforce uniform standards of policing, and provide officers with equipment and tools adequate for the job.

