



Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

November 5, 2021

City Council
VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

City Councilors –

I write to update you on our efforts to secure a new Chief of Police.

The current applicant pool is insufficient for a permanent appointment, and the search is suspended pending further City Council action.

After months of efforts to secure candidates, yesterday, the Police Chief Search Committee met and determined that our current applicant pool for the position is insufficient to support the appointment of a permanent Chief of Police, and recommended that we not continue the process with only this current pool.

While recognizing that the City and Police Department very much need a permanent Chief, I agree with the Search Committee's recommendation. We received only 21 applications, none from women, and only two of those candidates both met our minimum job requirements and advanced beyond a preliminary screening. I am committed to building a new consensus on the future of policing and public safety in this community, and hiring a new Chief legitimized by a strong selection process is critical towards achieving that consensus. Such a process is not possible with the current limited applicant pool.

Therefore, despite my deep appreciation for the two strong candidates who have put forward applications, I am taking the following actions:

- I am accepting the recommendation of the Search Committee and ending consideration of the current applicant pool;
- I have asked Acting Police Chief Jon Murad – who is one of the two strong candidates – to continue to serve as Acting Chief, and he has accepted my request. I am grateful for his continued service to Burlington through this challenging time for the Department and the City, and hope the Council, the Police Commission, and the public will join me in voicing appreciation for his commitment to service under these circumstances.
- I am suspending efforts to recruit a new, permanent Chief of Police until the City Council has taken the actions that will be needed for this search to be successful.

Search failed for multiple reasons under the City Council's control

From my perspective, the search failed in large part as a result of recent Council actions and lack of support to fully resource this process. Through this months-long process, my office has consulted with

multiple national experts and several potential candidates who chose not to apply, and we received consistent feedback about why our applicant pool was so limited:

- **We are not offering a competitive salary.** As detailed in the analysis by the Police Executive Research Forum that the Administration sent to the City Council on September 29, our current annual compensation is tens of thousands of dollars below the market. As you know, I asked the Council to raise the salary at the end of September when this concern became clear, but did not pursue the request after President Tracy made it clear Progressives would not support the change. A substantial increase in the salary will be essential to future search efforts.
- **The City needs to demonstrate that a new Chief will have the resources and support necessary to succeed.** Over the last 18 months, the City Council has taken numerous actions that have undermined the effectiveness of our once world-class and highly-progressive police department and the Chief's role, including: reducing the authorized headcount for sworn officers by 30 percent; attempting to remove all disciplinary authority from the Chief, and frequently ignoring the professional opinions of our Chiefs. Numerous times, I warned the Council that it was weakening the Department and risked creating an environment in which we would struggle to attract a permanent Chief and this has now come to pass.

In recent weeks, the Council finally has begun to correct the situation by approving our officer Recruitment and Retention Plan and finally restoring nearly half of the officer positions cut in June 2020. Despite this progress, more Council action – which I will detail in the days to come – will be needed to repair the damage done and to give the new Chief the necessary authority and capacity to rebuild the Police Department.

Moving forward

While I have never employed a search firm in nearly a decade of recruiting Department Heads, I believe the City Council will need to support the engagement of an expert recruitment firm for the search to be successful. Chiefs committed to 21st Century Policing are in high demand nationally, and securing a strong pool will require heightened efforts. In addition to facing the general workforce challenges that so many employers are currently experiencing, we must reckon with the reality that progressive Chiefs committed to the principles of 21st Century Policing are in high demand right now as the country grapples with the long overdue reckoning on racial justice precipitated by the murder of George Floyd and other national events.

My office has expended enormous energy since reopening the search in May to attempt to name a new, permanent Police Chief that has the support of the community (a timeline of our efforts is attached). Now, it is clear that this effort cannot be successful without new support from Councilors. I will re-open the search and invest more staff time and City resources into this effort only when the City Council has taken action to make success possible. In advance of your November 15 meeting, I will share a full list of Council actions that will be needed before the search can be successfully restarted.

Sincerely,



Miro Weinberger
Mayor

Timeline of Police Chief Search Process

- On May 14, Mayor Weinberger announced he would resume the Police Chief Search with a goal of concluding in November and [outlined a robust public process](#) that began with a community survey.
- On August 18, Mayor Weinberger [announced the position posting](#), which included a [Public Engagement Report](#) and a new [Ideal Candidate Profile](#).
- Following the priority deadline for applications on September 23, the Mayor's Office and Human Resources Director reviewed the 18 applications received, and recommended to the Search Committee that four candidates be screened for interviews.
- In late September, the Mayor's Office sought input from two police executive search firms who each made clear recommendations that a larger candidate pool would require a substantial increase to the Police Chief's Salary.
- The Search Committee expressed that the candidate pool was too small, and also supported increasing the Police Chief salary in order to attract more competitive candidates.
- The Search Committee's recommendation was shared with the City Council, however, Progressive City Councilors were not supportive of increasing the salary in line with those recommendations. Councilors requested that the Administration instead re-advertise the position at the current salary.
- On October 12, Human Resources re-advertised the position, and proceeded with screening applicants.
- Two candidates met the City's minimum job requirements and advanced beyond the preliminary screening.
- This week, Police Chief Search Committee determined that the current applicant pool for the position is insufficient to support the appointment of a permanent Chief of Police and recommended that we not continue the process with this current pool.