

October 21, 2019

Email to City of Madison Finance Committee members concerning amendment to delete independent police auditor funding from City of Madison budget for 2020.

The League of Women Voters of Dane County urges the members of the Finance Committee to defeat the amendment to the 2020 City budget which would delete funding for the police auditor.

Deleting the funding would reject the central recommendation of the Police Policy and Procedure Review Ad Hoc Committee. The Committee forwarded the independent monitor recommendation to the Mayor and Council in early August, before their report was completely finalized, because this recommendation “is so critical, both in its own right and to ensure successful implementation of all the other recommendations the Committee is making. . .”

The Committee met for nearly four years to examine the MPD’s policies and procedures and recommend changes. In addition, the President’s Work Group on Police and Community relations met for about seven months in 2016/2017 to develop lawful orders requiring certain policy changes.

These committees were established in the wake of multi-million dollar settlements resulting from shooting deaths in 2012, 2014, and 2015. Other incidents of concern in 2016 and 2019 involved residents experiencing mental health crises.

The League applauds the city for its willingness to establish these very important temporary committees, but it is clear that an *ongoing* structure is needed to ensure that our police policies and procedures are consistent with our community’s values.

Without an effective monitoring and oversight structure, how will we know whether our police are in fact living up to their own ideals and implementing the policy changes agreed upon? We understand that there are costs involved, but there are costs involved with continuing as we have in the past.

Madison’s insurance company will consider our settlement history in determining our premiums. Our underrepresented communities and advocacy groups will question whether Madison is serious about living up to our commitment to policing that appropriately deals with people of color and those experiencing mental health and drug crises. And all our residents need to have confidence that when they call the police for help, our police will respond in the professional, restrained, and helpful manner that the police and our community both want.

To summarize, the League of Women Voters supports the Ad Hoc Committee’s recommendation fund a police auditor to ensure that our police policies and procedures are consistent with our community’s values.