



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
Assembly Information Memorandum

Municipal Clerk's Office

No. AIM 21-2025

Meeting Date: January 21, 2025

Accepted

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From: ASSEMBLY MEMBER RIVERA

Subject: Municipal Attorney's Office Releases Critical Incident Reviews and Recommendations and Announces RFP for Comprehensive Review of APD Policies, Training, Tactics, and Supervision Related to Use of Force and De-Escalation.

For the Assembly's consideration please see the attached press release from the Municipal Attorney's Office releasing a critical incident review of an August 13, 2024 APD officer-involved shooting of Easter Leafa from Christopher Darcy of Fairfax Consulting Group and announcing a posted RFP for comprehensive review of APD policies, training, tactics and supervision pertaining to the use of force and de-escalation, with sealed proposals due by February 13, 2025.

Prepared by: Assembly Counsel's Office

Respectfully submitted: Felix Rivera, Assembly Member
District 4, Midtown



Municipality of Anchorage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 9, 2025

Municipal Attorney Eva Gardner releases critical incident review and recommendations and announces RFP for comprehensive review of APD policies, training, tactics, and supervision related to use of force and de-escalation

Municipal Attorney Eva Gardner releases critical incident review and recommendations and announces RFP for comprehensive review of APD policies, training, tactics, and supervision that pertain to use of force, de-escalation, and cultural awareness.

On August 15, 2024, Mayor Suzanne LaFrance and Chief of Police Sean [Case took action in response](#) to an August 13, 2024 officer-involved shooting.

Mayor LaFrance directed the Municipal Attorney to arrange two layers of outside review to understand the factors that lead to officer-involved shootings and to recommend changes to the Anchorage Police Department's ("APD") policies and training to reduce officer-involved shootings.

1. Investigation of the August 13, 2024 Incident

The first layer of review was to have a third-party investigator direct the administrative investigation of the August 13 incident. The Municipal Attorney's Office contracted with Mr. Christopher Darcy of Fairfax Consulting Group (FCG) for this review. Mr. Darcy has extensive experience in public safety, including 31 years with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD), where he served as Undersheriff, Assistant Sheriff, and Deputy Chief, and gained experience with police internal affairs investigations. Mr. Darcy is retired from LVMPD but currently serves as an independent Monitor of the Use of Force for the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Mr. Darcy has also served as an expert witness in use of force litigation, working with both plaintiffs and defendants.

The administrative investigation of an officer-involved shooting begins once any criminal process has concluded. The State of Alaska Office of Special Prosecutions concluded its criminal investigation into the August 13, 2024 incident and declined to bring charges against the involved officer on September 30, 2024.

Mr. Darcy began his work immediately upon conclusion of the State of Alaska's investigation. He was provided full access to all information and internal resources necessary to complete his investigation thoroughly, impartially, and efficiently, in conjunction with APD Internal Affairs personnel. His investigation benefited from the participation and perspective of the deceased individual's family members, who were present at the location of the August 13 incident.

At the conclusion of the investigation, Mr. Darcy presented his report to the Municipal Attorney. The report comprehensively analyzed the August 13 incident and recommended certain changes to APD policy and training. The full report cannot be made public because of legal constraints, including personnel privacy rights, but the Municipal Attorney requested that Mr. Darcy prepare a separate public report containing his recommendations for training and policy changes. The report accompanies this press release.

The report's 11 recommendations focus on information-gathering, leadership and supervision, command and control, de-escalation and response to resistance, development of force options, contact/cover, cultural competence, post-incident procedures, and equipment concerns.

2. Outside Review of APD Policies, Training, Tactics, and Supervision

The second layer of review is a comprehensive third-party review of APD's policies, training, tactics and supervision as they relate to use of force, de-escalation, and cultural awareness. The purpose of this review is to recommend best practices designed to reduce the incidence of officer-involved shootings. The Municipal Attorney, in collaboration with Chief Equity Officer Kim Waller, APD Chief Sean Case, and Special Assistant Thea Agnew Bemben in the Mayor's Office, prepared a Request for Proposals ("RFP"). The RFP is posted on the Municipality's [Purchasing website](#) and available through the Municipality's [BidExpress](#) page. All qualified individuals and entities are encouraged to submit a competitive sealed proposal by February 13, 2025.

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CHRISTOPHER DARCY

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CRITICAL INCIDENT REVIEW – OIS RESPONSE REVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In August 2024, in response to community concerns, the Mayor of the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) directed the Municipal Attorney to retain an external police practices consultant to conduct a critical incident review and supervise an investigation of an officer-involved shooting (OIS) of a sixteen-year-old female, Easter Leafa, by officers with the Anchorage Police Department (APD). The Municipal Attorney subsequently contracted with Mr. Christopher Darcy of Fairfax Consulting Group, LLC (FCG) to perform this task. Mr. Christopher Darcy and two APD Detectives completed the investigation on November 15, 2024, and provided internal affairs findings to the MOA and the APD Chief of Police.

The response recommendations report is based on Fairfax Consulting Group's review of this particular critical incident. It is designed to present and illustrate preliminary recommendations for enhancing Anchorage Police Department policies, standardized operating procedures, and training. Understanding that the Anchorage Police Department is committed to engaging a broader and more holistic review of its policies and practices in the coming months, this report focused on this particular set of facts and circumstances. The recommendations determined from the review of this incident and the lessons learned will provide the basis for future improvements in APD policy, culture, practices, and transparency.

Recommendations

Information gathering

Recommendation 1: Enhance policy to ensure (1) call takers and dispatchers receive regular training on information gathering requirements and (2) call taking and dispatch are included in the scope of after-action or investigative review process on critical incidents.

Leadership and supervision – Sergeants and Lieutenants

Recommendation 2: Enhance APD's supervision policy, making it more straightforward and comprehensive regarding sergeants' and lieutenants' expectations regarding critical incident response.

Recommendation 3: Enhance training to identify the specific actions that Sergeants and Lieutenants are expected to perform from the time of call assignment throughout the event's conclusion. The policy should cover various topics, including de-escalation options, intervention, roles and responsibilities, and creating an array of force options.

Command and Control

Recommendation 4: Enhance command and control policy and training to include a protocol for responding to incidents involving the threatened use of violence by individuals in possession of a deadly weapon. The policy change is intended to ensure supervisors react to a potential critical incident in a timely manner and are proactive in managing the encounter.

The policy improvements should consist of a process initiated by dispatch that ensures timely notification of a supervisor by requiring supervisors to announce their acknowledgment and/or self-dispatch to the call. If a sergeant is unavailable, dispatch will contact another sergeant or lieutenant to respond if possible. Supervisors should manage the utilization of tactics, supervise the incident, and determine the use of a shotgun, rifle, arrest team, less lethal option, or other tools/resources such as the APD Crisis Intervention Team.

The policy enhancement should include factors such as requiring verbal acknowledgment from supervisors assigned to high-risk calls, planning a response before arrival, assigning roles and responsibilities, coordinating the deployment of force options, deployment of less-lethal options, crisis intervention options, tactics for slowing the momentum, creating distance, and using cover, distance, and time as a tactic.

De-escalation and Response to Resistance

Recommendation 5: Enhance existing policy and training to include officers' and supervisors' responsibilities. This policy should consist of dispatch, patrol, supervision, and other units that may become involved. Every potential violent confrontation cannot always be de-escalated, but officers can impact many situations' direction, severity, and outcome based on their decision-making and tactics.

Development of Force Options

Recommendation 6: Enhance existing policy and training regarding appropriate force options, including an array of less lethal options, and the effective deployment by a team of officers. The training should clarify officer placement and effective communication in critical incidents.

Contact/Cover

Recommendation 7: Enhance Reality Based Training (RBT) to incorporate additional scenarios that reinforce the principles of contact officer and cover officer. Develop this concept in conjunction with a de-escalation response protocol.

Cultural Competence

Recommendations 8: Explore and implement meaningful ways to improve knowledge on effectively communicating with a diverse community. The policy should include specific steps to improve officers' abilities to communicate without placing any additional threat of harm on officers and empower them, when feasible, to determine if limiting factors could influence communication with a suspect. Factors to be considered are language and cultural differences, medical impairments, behavioral health issues, etc.

Post-incident procedures

Recommendation 9: Enhance policy and update practices for interacting with families and witnesses after officer-involved shootings and enhance policy and officer training on best managing the investigation by improving trauma-informed communication with families of those involved in critical incidents.

Equipment Concerns

Recommendation 10: Create a policy that defines when it is appropriate to use weapon-mounted lights to avoid a situation in which an officer inadvertently and unintentionally points a firearm at a human being. Weapon-mounted lights should not be used as a replacement for a flashlight.

Administrative Concerns

Recommendation 11: Review supervisor notification systems and procedures relating to officer weapons qualifications requirements.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CD' followed by a stylized flourish.

Christopher Darcy
CEO, Fairfax Consulting Group

December 6, 2024