

# Less Lethal Weapons Options Community Workgroup Recommendations

September 20, 2000

## **Committee Members:**

Debbie Barnes – Human Rights Commission  
Community Policing Action Council  
Betty Bartholomew – Lake City Task Force  
Tita Begashaw – East African Advisory Council  
Sandy Blair – US Dept. of Justice: Community Relations Services  
Reneschia Brown – Community Policing Action Council  
Mary Hurley – Ballard Merchant's Association  
Ray Mitchell – Community Policing Action Council  
Valerie Heide Mudra – West Precinct Advisory Council  
Frank Sanchez – Hispanic/Latino Advisory Council  
Doug Thiel – Cowen Park Advisory Council  
North Precinct Advisory Council  
Stan Wagner – North Precinct Advisory Council  
Sunset Hills Community  
Harriet Walden – Mother's for Police Accountability  
Richard Wildermuth – Community Policing Action Council  
Sexual Minorities Advisory Council  
Mary Williams – Seattle Neighborhood Group

## **Staff:**

Cathy Wenderoth – A/Director Public Affairs  
Harry Bailey – Director, Office of Police/Community Partnerships

**Recommendations**  
**Less Lethal Work Group**  
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## **Introduction**

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A group of community members were invited to work with the Seattle Police Department on the issue of less lethal weapons options. The impetus for

impaneling this work group came out of an incident involving a mentally ill man who was shot by police after shoplifting and shooting at store security guards.

While the scope of the recommendations herein are specific to less lethal weapon options, the group has spent the last three months learning about the policies, procedures, training and barriers encountered by officers when they are dealing with these highly charged incidents.

The group was invited to participate in a four-week education process that was conducted by SPD Officers. The topics covered were:

- \* Use of Force Policies and Procedures
- \* Firearms Training
- \* Firearms Training Simulator (Shoot/Don't Shoot)
- \* SWAT Policies & Procedures
- \* SWAT Demonstration of Less Lethal Weapons

At the conclusion of this process, the work of crafting the recommendations began. There have been several meetings and many revisions to the original document. The following is the culmination of the work the group has been doing over the last three months.

## **Recommendations**

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**Crisis Intervention Training:** In reviewing the issue of Less Lethal Weapons it became clear that a first line responder will encounter individuals suffering from mental illness or some type of crisis as a regular part of his/her day. Because of the potential for these situations to escalate quickly and thus require more serious use of force options, the group is recommending the following in terms of Crisis Intervention Training.

- \* All Patrol Officers and First Responders will receive mandatory eight-(8) hour Crisis Intervention Training within the next 18 months.
- \* All Sergeants and Lieutenants will be required to attend the 40-hour Crisis Intervention Training within the next 18 months. Anyone promoted to Sergeant or Lieutenant who has not completed the 40-hour course will complete such training within 120 days of promotion.
- \* Precinct Commanders shall determine the minimum number of Crisis Intervention Trained (40 Hours) Officers necessary to staff Precinct needs. All Precincts will be at and maintain minimum staffing for CIT within the 18 months. Successful completion of 40-hour course certifies officer for CIT title.
- \* All certified CIT Officers should receive premium pay to be determined through labor negotiations.

- \* An eight-(8) hour refresher course on Crisis Intervention will be required for all patrol officers every two years.
- \* An annual eight-(8) hour refresher course on Crisis Intervention will be required for any officer who is CIT certified including Sergeants and Lieutenants.
- \* A portion of Crisis Intervention Training will focus on personal safety for officers

**Training on Weapons:** This includes training for less lethal as well as handguns and shotguns that are standard issue to officers.

- \* Prior to **OR** at the time of issuance of any less lethal weapon, the officer will successfully complete a mandatory training program on the use of the issued weapon. All officers must qualify annually in the use of the weapon.
- \* Simulator training will be required a minimum of once a year for first line responders and every two years for all others.
- \* The Department will train and maintain adequate staff to operate the Simulator Training recommended in this proposal.
- \* A portion of the training will focus on personal safety for officers.

### **Weapons and Ammunition:**

Members of the group have expressed hesitancy to recommend specific weapons because of a lack of expertise in this area. The Department demonstrated a variety of weapon options and we have been made aware that all weapons may be lethal and that there is no weapon that is perfect. Of what was presented the following is recommended.

- \* A 12-gauge shotgun with a distinct colored butt for use with the new bean bags (drag stabilized) will be issued to all patrol vehicles.
- \* All less lethal weapon ammunition must be clearly identified as "less lethal" by distinct markings easily identified in the field.
- \* The new M26-tasers will be issued to all Patrol Sergeants and other patrol personnel as training and protocols are developed.
- \* The Department will do an ongoing evaluation of new less lethal weapons, consulting with other law enforcement agencies, to ensure they are keeping pace with the new technology.

### **Policies and Procedures:**

- \* Prior to the issuance of less lethal weapons to officers a clear policy and procedure shall be developed and implemented. These policies and procedures

shall include safety measures for the less lethal weapons, as well as, protocols for such use, i.e. back up by other officers with lethal weapons, etc.

### **Budget and Funding:**

- \* The SPD will develop a budget for these proposed recommendations and submit the budget proposal to the Mayor and City Council.
- \* The Mayor and City Council will provide funds for identified training, acquisition of weapons and ammunition, public education and evaluation of less lethal weapon program.
- \* This provision will not negatively impact funding for SWAT unit in terms of staffing, training, and other expenditures that allow them to operate in the fashion they currently do.

### **Community Education:**

- \* Provide outreach to community to educate on Crisis Intervention Training, Use of Force, Less Lethal Weapons, and other initiatives the SPD is involved in regarding this issue.
- \* Provide ongoing information to the community on the incidents where SWAT or CIT is used and the outcome of those incidents.
- \* Actively promote the use of the term "less lethal" and educate community on the potential for "less lethal" weapons to cause serious injury or death in some circumstances.
- \* Develop a stronger relationship with the media to highlight successes of SPD with press releases to regional and neighborhood papers.

### **Evaluation**

- \* A report shall be submitted to the work group detailing the City and Department's response to these recommendations by 1/1/01
- \* At the end of one year an internal and external evaluation shall be conducted on the Use of Less Lethal Weapons.

### **Addendum**

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This commission recognizes that the need for a less lethal response is due in part to the state and the county's inability to deal effectively with the mentally ill. Several issues emerged during the course of the work that fall outside the scope of Less Lethal Weapons Options, but caused concern for the group. It was the feeling that a number of factors played into the overall effectiveness of Officers

who are responding day after day to incidents that have the potential to end tragically, much like the one that was the impetus for this report. While we recognize that the proposals we have submitted will go a long way towards giving police officers the tools they need to deal with the mentally ill, we sincerely believe that our elected officials at the state and county level should be encouraged to provide longer term solutions.

The aforementioned recommendations address the weaponry and training, but do not represent the totality of what needs to be done. A big issue that Police must grapple with is the ever-increasing demand put upon them by the communities they serve. Police are asked to take on everything from parenting to garbage collection. At the same time, the number of Police Officers and the budget appropriated has not kept pace with the demand. The fact that a chronically mentally ill person was out on the street, had access to firearms, knives, and other weapons, and had little to no support from the medical community speaks profoundly to this issue. Then when a tragedy occurs we rush to blame the Police. City Government needs to do an overall assessment of what services it provides, and who is responsible for the provision of those services. After that is completed a clearly stated list of expectations needs to be provided to all City Agencies with the resources necessary to provide the services appropriated.

The other issue that arises is that of compensation. Any private business owner will tell you that the way to attract and keep quality employees is to compensate them adequately for the work they do. We, as a community, need to decide if we are willing to pay the price to attract and keep the "best". Police Officers are often asked to do the impossible and we need to pay them accordingly.

As we learned in compiling these recommendations, the issue of public safety is an incredibly complex one. We feel we have addressed the issue we were convened to address, but feel equally as strong that the "solution" cannot be realized unless we look at what sits underneath the surface of this problem.