

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE REPORT

2020 Legislative Session

Reference No.: CR-068-2020

Draft No.: 1

Committee: Committee of the Whole

Date: 7/14/2020

Action: FAV

REPORT: Favorable 11-0: Council Members Turner, Anderson-Walker, Davis, Dernoga, Franklin, Glaros, Harrison, Hawkins, Ivey, Streeter and Taveras

CR-068-2020 was introduced on July 14th and referred to the Committee of the Whole. CB-68 pursuant to Section 505 of the County Charter, if approved, would extend the appointment of Acting Police Chief Hector Velez for a period, beginning August 18, 2020, and up to four calendar months after that time. By Executive Order No. 14 2020, Mr. Hector Velez was appointed Acting Chief of Police, effective June 19, 2020.

A representative from the Office of the County Executive addressed the Council briefly and informed the Council that Chief Velez had not been asked to attend considering this is just for an extension of the appointment. It was noted that traditionally individuals being considered for appointment attend these meetings and it was suggested that consideration of the appointment be delayed until later in the agenda to allow time for the Council to ask questions.

Public speakers were given an opportunity to address the Council. Ms. Amity Pope explained the reason for her support for the reappointment is due to a proposed community engagement plan which will feature the Chief in townhalls and community forums countywide.

Upon the arrival of the Chief some information about his background was presented. Acting Chief Velez previously served as the Assistant Police Chief, the second highest ranking position in the department, and he previously held a variety of command and staff assignments within the Department, to include: Assistant Commander, District I Station (Hyattsville); Executive Officer to the Chief of Police; Chair of the Department Administrative Hearing Board; Commander, Police Personnel Division; Commander, District I Station; Deputy Chief: Bureau of Patrol and Deputy Chief, Bureau of Investigation.

Acting Chief Velez holds an associate degree in Criminal Justice, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Organizational Management, and a Master of Science degree in Management from the Johns Hopkins University. He is also a graduate of the Police Executive Leadership Institute, Major Cities Chief's Association.

Acting Chief Velez said, it is an honor to be able to lead the men and women of the department and to serve the residents and that he understands the great responsibility inherent to the position of Acting Chief and that he is confident that he is up to the task. Mr. Velez committed to meeting with each

Council Member in the coming weeks to learn more about individual concerns in their districts.

Acting Chief Velez response to Council Members questions:

- Plans to focus on recruiting from within Prince George's County. Radio and Television advertisements will be a part of the strategy contingent upon funding.
- Considering plans to have all Deputy Chiefs and Commanders frequently available in the community to build stronger relationships. COPS officers may be rotated with patrol officers to engage the community and develop a better rapport.
- Concern was expressed about the loss of the Police Band due to the role it played in showcasing police officers. Acting Chief Velez is willing to look at the possibility of bringing it back.
- A comprehensive plan is being created to better manage the illegal use of off-road vehicles on our roadways.
- Plans to review issues such as prostitution, "beer houses," Illegal vending, curb stoning, and rent parties. Acting Chief Velez stated, the problem is our answer has always been to send the police. Others are better equipped to deal with certain societal issues. Acting Chief Velez wants social workers or others with the requisite training to help with those issues. Beer houses and brothels are a focus and they will be available to assist the Council Members efforts and will do so from a holistic standpoint.
- Acting Chief Velez reflected on his experience from Howard County where every officer was a community-oriented police officer. The goal is to shift the department to that mindset and stop just chasing bad actors. Data collection has been a focus, but it must be turned inward to get a better understanding of the agency and the officers and that allows the department to build a police department that is representative of the County it serves.
- Review of general orders will be updated with a "critical eye" inclusive of feedback from community stakeholders and the department will update the mission statement.
- The leadership of the department will not be required to reapply for their positions. Acting Chief Velez pointed out that as the interim Chief I may not be here and that if he is not it could be a disservice to another Chief who may need the flexibility.
- Acting Chief Velez is also working with the County Executive on the search process so that people can see how it works and trust that process.

The Office of Law found CR-068-2020 to be in proper legislative form with no legal impediments to its adoption.

After discussion the Council voted, favorably on CR-068-2020, 11-0.