

City and County
of San Francisco



Board of Supervisors,
District 6

MATT DORSEY

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NEWS RELEASE

Dorsey pushes police recruitment bonus matching policy to avoid ‘catastrophic’ SFPD staffing shortage

Proposed resolution also urges the San Francisco Police Commission to develop a plan to achieve recommended staffing levels of 2,182 full-duty police officers within 48 months

SAN FRANCISCO (Jan. 23, 2023) — Supervisor Matt Dorsey will introduce a resolution tomorrow urging San Francisco’s Department of Human Resources to adopt a policy to automatically match top police recruitment bonuses offered by competing jurisdictions in Northern California — many of which now significantly out-bid San Francisco for new and lateral hires of police officers. The resolution additionally urges the San Francisco Police Commission to develop a plan for reaching the recommended SFPD staffing level of 2,182 police officers within four years.

Dorsey’s move comes in the wake of alarming new data presented to police commissioners last week showing that the San Francisco Police Department’s full-duty staffing numbers have dropped to an historically unprecedented low point in recent decades: 1,537 police officers — with nearly 500 of them currently eligible for retirement.

“San Francisco is on the precipice of a potentially catastrophic police staffing shortage, and there are too many public safety problems we’ll be helpless to solve if we don’t start solving SFPD’s understaffing crisis first,” said Dorsey.

“Although recruitment bonuses are only one factor that prospective police officers and their families may consider when deciding where to pursue their law enforcement careers, they are a factor San Francisco should never voluntarily yield to competing jurisdictions,” Dorsey continued. “San Francisco has the largest municipal budget of any city in Northern California, and I think we must leverage that when it comes to competing for the best, most dedicated and diverse police force we can attract to protect and serve our city.”

A survey of police recruitment bonuses and starting salaries provided to the Board of Supervisors last year¹ showed a representative sampling of nearly two dozen law enforcement agencies statewide that provide more generous recruitment bonuses than San Francisco. At least four Bay Area cities — Alameda, Hayward, San Mateo and Daly City — offer both larger recruitment bonuses and more generous starting salaries than SFPD.

Dorsey’s 7-page resolution provides an overview of work by city policymakers over the last several years to adopt data-informed, workload-based metrics to calculate recommended police staffing levels, which 71 percent of city voters adopted into the City Charter in November 2020. To date, however, these efforts “have failed even to move in the right direction toward the recommended 2,182-officer minimum,” according to the resolution.

The proposed resolution includes a provision urging the San Francisco Police Commission “to develop a plan for achieving within 48 months” recommended full-duty police staffing levels, “and to report back to the Board of Supervisors in time for citywide elections in 2024 if a revised Charter Amendment is necessary.” The resolution additionally urges continued progress by SFPD, DHR and others to improve efficiencies in the recruiting and hiring of prospective officers. Note: the term “full duty” has historically been used in City Charter police staffing provisions to mean officers “who are fully able to perform police duties,” exclusive of those on temporary modified duty or on any of various forms of leave.

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¹ Response to Request for Information from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, SFPD, June 3, 2022, <https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:20df832b-2346-306a-8ff8-9ad11a06c10e>.

[Urging the Department of Human Resources to Enhance the Competitiveness of Police Recruitment Bonuses and the Police Commission to Develop a Full-Duty Staffing Plan]

Resolution urging the San Francisco Department of Human Resources to explore ways to adopt a policy to automatically match top police recruitment bonuses offered by law enforcement agencies in Northern California that compete for new and laterally hired police officers; urging the Police Commission to develop a sworn staffing plan to achieve within 48 months recommended full-duty police staffing levels; and urging continued improved efficiencies in the recruitment and hiring of prospective SFPD officers.

WHEREAS, Despite considerable efforts in recent years to remedy San Francisco's shortage in police staffing, the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) continues to face a worsening understaffing crisis, with the most recent count of 1,537 full-duty SFPD officers now 645 officers short of the current recommended overall sworn staffing level of 2,182; and

WHEREAS, According to SFPD's latest budget presentation to the Police Commission,¹ the total number of sworn SFPD officers now eligible for retirement is 478 — far outpacing the combined total of new recruits or lateral transfers hired from outside law enforcement agencies to pass SFPD field training, which over the last two calendar years has not exceeded 21 police officers annually; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco's current police staffing is at an historically unprecedented low in modern times, with full-duty sworn staffing numbers now

¹ SFPD FY24 & FY25 Budget, Part One – Budget Process & Priorities, San Francisco Police Department, Jan. 18, 2023, page 11, https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/PoliceCommission11823-FY24%20Budget%201st%20Presentation%20F_Final.pdf (accessed Jan. 19, 2023)

1 significantly below the previous low point of 1,657 full-duty officers, which was reached
2 in 2014; and

3 WHEREAS, Police staffing shortages are not unique to San Francisco and reflect
4 increasingly dire national and statewide trends, with a National Public Radio report last
5 week attributing “to staffing shortages” why longer police response times are being
6 observed in data collected in a survey of 15 cities, including San Francisco;² and a
7 recent *Los Angeles Times* report describing the police staffing crisis in some Northern
8 California jurisdictions as “catastrophic”;³ and

9 WHEREAS, Well-intended efforts in recent years by the Board of Supervisors,
10 Mayor, San Francisco Police Commission, and voters to remedy chronic police
11 understaffing in our City have thus far continued to fall short in adequately incentivizing
12 interest from sufficient numbers of prospective new recruits or lateral transfers from
13 competing law enforcement agencies to meet San Francisco’s urgent demand for more
14 police officers; and

15 WHEREAS, The most recent of these efforts was Proposition E, a Police Staffing
16 Charter Amendment in the November 3, 2020 Consolidated General Election, which by
17 71 percent of San Francisco voters approved based on its promise to “remove the
18 outdated mandatory minimum police staffing requirement, and establish a regular
19 process to set police staffing levels based on data and the needs of our communities”;⁴
20 and
21

22 ² “Why data from 15 cities shows police response times are taking longer” by Martin Kaste, NPR, Jan. 17, 2023,
23 <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/17/1149455678/why-data-from-15-cities-show-police-response-times-are-taking-longer> (accessed Jan. 17, 2023)

24 ³ Source: “‘Catastrophic staffing shortage’: Northern California sheriff to suspend daytime patrols” by Brittney Mejia
25 and Connor Sheets, *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 15, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-11-15/northern-california-sheriffs-office-will-suspend-daytime-patrols-due-to-catastrophic-staffing-shortage> (accessed Jan. 15, 2023)

⁴ City and County of San Francisco Department of Elections, Voter Information Pamphlet & Sample Ballot, November 3, 2020, Consolidated General Election, Proponent’s Argument in Favor of Proposition E, page 78, https://webbie1.sfpl.org/multimedia/pdf/elections/November3_2020.pdf (accessed Jan. 15, 2023)

1 WHEREAS, The 2020 Charter Amendment represented the culmination of a long
2 and participatory process that began with a 2016 policy analysis by the Board of
3 Supervisors' Budget and Legislative Analyst, which concluded that the methodology for
4 SFPD's staffing "should be based on a workload-based assessment that accounts for
5 department-specific conditions, as well as a comprehensive examination of historical
6 workload data";⁵ and

7 WHEREAS, In March 2017, the Board of Supervisors passed without opposition
8 Resolution No. 63-17, "Urging the San Francisco Police Commission to Convene a
9 Task Force on Strategic Police Staffing," entreating the San Francisco Police
10 Commission to develop a broadly representative Task Force on Strategic Police Staffing
11 to "implement a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach to determining staffing
12 levels based on different factors, including studies on calls for service, crime data,
13 officer workload, how deployment is determined, retirees, injuries, demographics,
14 language needs, and population size"; and

15 WHEREAS, In May 2018, the City Controller's Office's City Performance Unit
16 conducted research into public safety industry best practices, which included interviews
17 with police staffing experts and a review of applicable literature, and concurred that an
18 appropriate framework for police staffing should be based on workload targets, with a
19 "rough guideline" being one-third of officers' time "spent on calls for service," one-third
20 of officers' time "for officer-initiated and administrative tasks," and one-third of officers'
21 time devoted to "uncommitted patrol time for community policing";⁶ and
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24 ⁵ Budget and Legislative Analyst's Office, "Policy Analysis Report: Best Practices Related to Police Staffing and
25 Funding Levels," Jan. 26, 2016, page 20, <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/FileCenter/Documents/54867-012616%20Police%20Staffing%20Methodology.pdf> (accessed Jan. 16, 2023)

⁶ "SFPD Car Sector Patrol Staffing Analysis" by Corina Monzón and Celeste Berg, Office of the Controller, City Performance Unit, May 8, 2018, page 19, <https://openbook.sfgov.org/webreports/details3.aspx?id=2573> (accessed on Jan. 16, 2023)

1 WHEREAS, In early 2019, the San Francisco Police Department engaged Matrix
2 Consulting Group, Ltd. ("Matrix") to conduct an independent and comprehensive staffing
3 analysis of SFPD, relying on Matrix's expertise in having conducted more than 350 such
4 studies for law enforcement agencies in the United States and Canada; and

5 WHEREAS, In March 2020, Matrix released its 293-page report⁷ following an
6 exhaustive fact-finding and analytical endeavor that included: (1) on-site interviews "with
7 SFPD leadership, managers in each departmental functional area, many unit
8 supervisors and line staff throughout the Department"; (2) "specific input from the San
9 Francisco Police Officers' Association"; (3) input and feedback from meetings held with
10 "[then-Board President Norman] Yee, the City Controller's Office, the District Attorney's
11 Office and others"; (4) "data collection and analysis across every service area in order
12 to understand workloads, staff availability, and staffing needs"; and (5) an "iterative and
13 interactive process" in which Matrix "reviewed findings at several levels within the
14 department and city, including the Police Commission, an internal steering committee
15 within SFPD as well as the executive team, Supervisor Yee, representatives from the
16 Mayor's Office, and the Staffing Task Force, which is comprised of representatives from
17 the Controller's Office and community members"; and

18 WHEREAS, Matrix concluded in its March 2020 report that its independently
19 recommended minimum sworn staffing level for SFPD was 2,176 officers; and that the
20 2021 update required under the 2020 Proposition E Police Staffing Charter Amendment
21 was a modest upward revision to 2,182 officers; and

22 WHEREAS, Notwithstanding the enormous amount of work done by City leaders,
23 police commissioners, SFPD members and contractors in recent years to address our
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⁷ Matrix Consulting Group, "Report on the Police Department; Staffing Analysis San Francisco, CA," March 4, 2020, <https://www.sanfranciscopolice.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/SFPDStaffingStudyReport20210304.pdf> (accessed on Jan. 17, 2023)

1 City's worsening crisis in police understaffing, SFPD's sworn staffing levels have failed
2 even to move in the right direction toward the recommended 2,182-officer minimum;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Even against the backdrop of widely reported national trends in
5 police staffing shortages,⁸ San Francisco is being out-competed by multiple law
6 enforcement agencies in Northern California with hiring bonuses and other incentives
7 for new recruits and lateral transfers, according to data provided recently to the Board of
8 Supervisors,⁹ and that representative examples of agencies that currently surpass
9 SFPD's \$5,000 lateral signing bonus program include the following:

- 10 • A \$40,000 structured bonus for lateral transfers to the Redding Police
11 Department;
- 12 • A \$30,000 signing bonus for lateral transfers to the Alameda Police Department;
- 13 • A \$30,000 structured bonus for lateral transfers to the Dixon Police Department;
- 14 • A \$30,000 signing bonus for lateral transfers to the San Mateo Police
15 Department;
- 16 • A \$20,000 signing bonus for lateral transfers and \$10,000 signing bonuses for
17 new recruits and academy graduates to the Hayward Police Department;
- 18 • A \$20,000 signing bonus for academy graduates and lateral transfers to the
19 Vacaville Police Department;
- 20 • A \$15,000 signing bonus for academy graduates and lateral transfers to the
21 BART Police Department; and

24 ⁸ "Staffing shortages cause for concern among law enforcement agencies nationwide" by Omar Villafranca, CBS
25 News, Nov. 26, 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/police-officer-staffing-shortages-law-enforcement-agencies-nationwide> (accessed Jan. 19, 2023)

⁹ Response to Request for Information from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, SFPD, June 3, 2022, <https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:20df832b-2346-306a-8ff8-9ad11a06c10e>.

- A \$10,000 signing bonus for new recruits and lateral transfers to the Daly City Police Department, among others; and

WHEREAS, Although recruitment bonuses and salaries are only one factor in decisions that law enforcement professionals and their families make in choosing a jurisdiction to pursue their careers, they are a factor that San Francisco should not yield to law enforcement agencies in competing jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, Chronic understaffing in SFPD creates needlessly expensive and wasteful inefficiencies, with budgetary savings that derive from vacant police officer positions more than offset by mounting needs for overtime pay to address operational staffing shortages and myriad unforeseen public safety imperatives; and

WHEREAS, Public opinion polling of San Franciscans by EMC Research between April 27 and May 3, 2022 for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce's annual Dignity Health CityBeat Poll¹⁰ identified an overwhelming public demand for City leaders to prioritize police staffing in ways that included: 80 percent support for "increasing the number of police officers on the street in high crime areas"; 75 percent support for "increasing the number of police officers on the street in busy areas"; and 77 percent support for "Expanding community-based police work in neighborhoods"; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco's City Charter provides that the Mayor, through the Human Resources Director, is responsible for management and administration of all labor relations of the City, including bargaining with employees through their recognized employee organizations regarding salaries, working conditions, benefits and other terms and conditions of employment, which would include establishing bonus matching provisions for police recruitment; and

¹⁰ 2022 Dignity Health CityBeat Poll, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, May 16, 2022, <https://sfchamber.com/2022-dignity-health-citybeat-poll-results/> (accessed Jan. 16, 2023)

1 WHEREAS, DHR and the San Francisco Police Department have in recent
2 months reformed processes and generally improved efficiencies in the recruitment and
3 hiring of police officers in San Francisco; now therefore be it

4 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges DHR to explore ways to adopt
5 a policy to automatically match top police recruitment bonuses offered by law
6 enforcement agencies in Northern California that compete for new and laterally hired
7 police officers; and be it

8 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the San Francisco
9 Police Commission, in coordination with SFPD, to develop a plan for achieving within 48
10 months the recommended full-duty police staffing level contemplated in 2020's
11 Proposition E, and to report back to the Board of Supervisors in time for citywide
12 elections in 2024 if a revised Charter Amendment is necessary to timely achieve
13 recommended staffing levels; and be it

14 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges DHR, SFPD, and
15 the San Francisco Police Commission to continue collaborative efforts to improve
16 efficiencies in recruiting and hiring prospective police officers in the City and County of
17 San Francisco.