



Legislation Text

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Clerk 11/05/2013

A MOTION requiring that the sheriff's office provide to the council annually a report with data on the results of its internal review of complaints and investigations of employee misconduct.

WHEREAS, the justice and safety goal of the King County Strategic Plan prioritizes keeping people safe in their homes and communities, and

WHEREAS, the service excellence goal of the King County Strategic Plan prioritizes building a culture of service that is responsive and accountable to the community, and

WHEREAS, according to the sheriff's General Orders Manual, "a law enforcement agency must maintain a high level of personal and official conduct if it is to command and deserve the respect and confidence of the public it serves," and

WHEREAS, although the overwhelming majority of deputies and employees of the sheriff's office serve with honor and distinction, stories or instances of misconduct, even if isolated and infrequent, can damage the reputation of the entire sheriff's office and erode community trust, and

WHEREAS, to build and maintain community trust, it is incumbent on sheriff's office leadership and managing supervisors to foster an environment in which ethical and conscientious behavior is expected and each individual is responsible for meeting those expectations, and

WHEREAS, a culture that values integrity and holds individuals accountable is critical for sustaining community trust, and the community must know that issues of concern will be reviewed objectively, investigated thoroughly and resolved in a fair and just manner, and

WHEREAS, a strong and effective internal investigations unit and system for investigating complaints of misconduct reinforce a culture of integrity and accountability, and are crucial components for building and maintaining community trust, and

WHEREAS, the council has stated in several pieces of legislation that it is the policy of the county to increase the level of public trust and transparency of sheriff's operations and to identify systemic issues within the sheriff's office and offer recommendations for reform, and

WHEREAS, the council recognized in its efforts to create a framework for oversight of the sheriff's office that the council and the public need access to data in a timely and transparent manner, and

WHEREAS, the sheriff's office, in making improvements to its systems for monitoring and investigating alleged personnel misconduct, has established a well-defined system for receiving, documenting, investigating and resolving complaints of misconduct for its employees, and

WHEREAS, the sheriff's office documents each complaint and tracks each complaint to its conclusion, and has data available to show the frequency and types of complaints, the number of resolutions and the outcomes of these investigations and that this information is a valuable tool for the sheriff's office to track its actions in addressing employee misconduct and to implement its policy to ensure public trust in sheriff's office employees, and

WHEREAS, the information on sheriff's office complaints, investigations and outcomes would be very useful to the council and the public;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The sheriff's office shall develop an annual report summarizing its data on the investigation of complaints of misconduct.

B. The reports shall include, at a minimum, for each year and the three prior years, the following:

1. The number of complaints and allegations received, including information on the origin of the complaint, be it either citizen or internal;

2. The number of complaints, allegations or incidents in the following areas:

- a. minor misconduct;
- b. major misconduct;
- c. use of force; and
- d. criminal investigations;

3. The number of complaint, allegation and incident resolutions by classification, to include data on the types of personnel actions taken when complaints are sustained, and data on the administrative actions taken when the investigation results in recommendations for changes in sheriff's operations, such as training or policies;

4. The number of individual employees that have accrued three or more complaints in the reporting year or eight or more complaints total in the reporting year and the prior three years. The sheriff shall identify the outcome of the complaints and note whether any personnel or administrative action resulted from the complaints for these employees; and

5. Narrative information on any trends identified through its internal investigations and complaint process, and recommendations of any potential legislative changes that the sheriff's office has identified in its evaluation of complaint data that, if implemented, could improve public trust in the law enforcement.

C. The sheriff's office first report shall be transmitted to the council, accompanied by a motion to accept the report, by March 1, 2014. The subsequent reports shall be transmitted to the council by March 1 of each year. The reports called for in this motion shall be transmitted in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy to the clerk of the council, who shall distribute electronic copies to all councilmembers, the director of the office of law enforcement oversight, and the lead staff for the committee of the whole, law, justice, health and human services committee and the government accountability, oversight and financial performance committee, or their successors.