



POLICE CHIEF RECRUITMENT PUBLIC INPUT REPORT

AUGUST 2024



TOPEKA POLICE
DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

As a part of the recruitment process for the next Topeka Police Chief, the City of Topeka provided multiple opportunities for the community to give input. The first opportunity was a community survey that was provided in both English and Spanish. The survey was open from July 22, 2024 through August 3, 2024. In addition to the survey, the city also hosted three public input sessions in various parts of the community.



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PUBLIC INPUT OVERVIEW

The following input was gathered from 260 survey responses and comments from citizens at three public input sessions. These are the major themes we collected from the survey and public input sessions.

WHAT ARE THE TOP QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS YOU FEEL ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE NEW POLICE CHIEF TO HAVE?

- Communication and Transparency: Effective communication skills and transparency in actions.
- Integrity
- Leadership Skills
- Visionary Leadership: Ability to provide forward-thinking and strategic guidance.
- Accountability
- Dedication to the Community: Be open to hearing from the community and take time to meet with community leaders.

Other mentions: Strong organization skills, experience with budgeting, open-minded with the willingness to learn and make changes.

WHAT ARE THE TOP PRIORITIES THE NEW POLICE CHIEF SHOULD FOCUS ON?

- Crime Reduction: Focusing on reducing violent crime rates and improving overall public safety.
- Community Engagement: Building strong relationships with the community and increasing public trust.
- Traffic Safety: Addressing traffic-related issues, including crash prevention and improving road safety.
- Drug Control: Tackling drug-related crimes and substance abuse in the community.
- Homelessness
- Recruitment: Work to get a fully staffed department and focus on recruitment of minority, female, and bilingual officers
- Increase CIT/Mental Health Training for Officers: Be open to the idea of contracting with other organizations besides Valeo.

Other mentions: Maintain good relationships with the DA and other elected officials, increase transparency.



PUBLIC INPUT OVERVIEW (CONT.)

WHAT TYPE OF EXPERIENCE AND/OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SHOULD OUR NEW POLICE CHIEF HAVE IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL HISTORY?

- Management and Leadership: Extensive experience in management and leadership roles within law enforcement, not necessarily as a former chief of police.
- Community Policing: Proven track record in community policing and engaging with diverse community groups.
- Operational Experience: Hands-on experience in handling street-level police work and tactical operations.
- Proven Success in Previous Roles: Data-driven crime reduction strategies and policies, development of diverse or unique training.

Other mentions: Community involvement (volunteer work), from a community of a similar size and diversity make-up, familiarity with government, familiar with the Topeka community.

WHAT SPECIFIC ISSUES IN THE COMMUNITY YOU FEEL THE NEW POLICE CHIEF SHOULD ADDRESS?

- Crime Rates: Increasing crime rates, particularly violent crimes, are a major concern.
- Traffic Violations: Issues like red-light running and stop sign violations are prevalent.
- Public Perception: Addressing the public's perception and stigma related to crime in the area.
- Domestic Abuse: Focus on reducing domestic violence and supporting victims.
- Review the Complaint Process: Make improvements to the process to make citizens more comfortable with reporting issues, focus on making the process more independent of the police department.

Other mentions: More support for crime victims, equitable patrolling across Topeka, review of officers disciplinary records and make adjustments as needed.



PUBLIC INPUT OVERVIEW (CONT.)

ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD FEEL THE CITY SHOULD CONSIDER IN THE POLICE CHIEF HIRING PROCESS AS WE MOVE FORWARD?

- External Hiring: Considering candidates from outside the current department to bring fresh perspectives.
- Stress Management: The ability to handle and manage stressful situations effectively and being able to check in with officers on mental health.

Other mentions: Conducting extensive background checks, other outside responsibilities that may impact commitment to the job (i.e: military involvement)

CONCLUSION

The survey responses and public input comments indicate a strong desire for a police chief who is communicative, transparent, and deeply engaged with the community. There is a focus on reducing violent crime, improving traffic safety, and addressing mental health, substance abuse and homelessness. The importance of selecting a candidate with a proven track record in leadership and experience working with diverse communities was also mentioned multiple times.

