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10/30/06
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Dear Councilmembers,

I was very pleased to see that the Council and the Mayor took seriously the many neighbors who testified to the need for more Police Officers in Seattle. I read with great interest Councilmember Steinbrueck's proposal for 50 Officers per year, the Council's news release, "Councilmembers intend to develop comprehensive public safety budget package", and Councilmember Licata's press release: "Public Safety needs nuanced, complex approach".

Both the Council and the Mayor are, I believe, suggesting a study of Seattle Policing to estimate our future needs. That, and the ongoing geographically based Policing initiative, will help us get a good grasp on how many Officers we truly need.

It is very tempting to await the outcome of that study, and then act on its recommendations. However, as it is abundantly clear that we do indeed need some additional Officers, **I urge you to immediately budget for as many new Officers as the State Police Academy can train for us next year.** Chief Kerlikowske explained to us, at a recent neighborhood meeting, that it was difficult to locate qualified Police Officer candidates, and that there was a strict limit on how many can be trained each year.

It is therefore crucial that we immediately begin training as many officers as feasible. It is intrinsically unlikely that, when the report is presented, we will find ourselves with an excess of Officers.

At another recent meeting (that of the East Precinct Crime Prevention Coalition), Captain Landy Black revealed a very disturbing statistic to us: the number of Officers available for patrol duty in the East Precinct is ever dwindling. The number of officers is stable, but non-patrol duties they are required to engage in (Homeland Security duties, training on new technology, etc) leaves fewer and fewer Officers to patrol our streets and maintain public safety.

In closing, I remind you of our ever-increasing population, our increasingly urban environment (and the Mayor's plan to make our city yet more dense) and hence of the ongoing need to increase the number of patrol Officers on our street.

Please budget funds to start the immediate hiring and training of as many new Seattle Police Officers as feasible. When the studies are completed, we'll certainly find that we need them.

Sincerely yours,

Andrew Taylor