



**Public Safety Committee Minutes**  
**January 7, 2026**

Police Court Campus, 1805 Continental Place

**Present**

Mayor Donovan

Councilmembers: Beaton, Daman, Hudson, Oliver, Tercero, Vander  
Stoep, West

Staff: Fire Chief Harris, Police Chief Christman, City Attorney  
Rogerson, Finance Director Volesky

Citizens: 20

1. **Opening Ceremonies:** Councilmember Tercero called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. **Approval of Agenda:** The agenda was approved as presented
3. **Approval of Minutes:** The December 3, 2025, Public Safety Committee and December 17, 2025, Development Services Committee minutes were approved as presented.
4. **Fire**
  - A. 2025-01 December Flood Fight: Chief Harris provided an overview of the flood event that occurred the week of December 8, 2025. The city experienced record setting flooding at 37.73 feet. The flood fight included never seen before State and local government evacuations. Early preparations included opening an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at Mount Vernon Fire Station 2, integrating Information Technology (IT) services, installation of the flood wall, and the closure of the Division Street bridge. He reviewed the gauge information from the gauge located east of the Riverside Bridge and the processes that were deployed with local, state, and federal agencies. There was a major public information campaign via press releases and on social media.

Conclusion and Next Steps: No fatalities, injuries, or damages have been reported in connection with the flooding from Mount Vernon residents. Staff is working on reporting requirements to request reimbursement from the federal government. After actions/hotwash of the event include a review of the operations and determine what worked and what needs improvement.

Chief Harris expressed appreciation to all staff that assisted in the operations of the EOC.

- B. Personnel – New Hires, Training Plan, etc.: Chief Harris acknowledged the passage of the levy lid lift and announced nine new Fire Fighter hires; there is one position pending. The timeline of the hiring, academy attendance, and Mount Vernon equipment and process training. Shift assignments will begin in June 2026.

## **5. Police**

- A. IOS Update: Chief Christman recognized Integrated Outreach Services Supervisor Erin Von Fempé who recently retired. Ms. Von Fempé recalled her time with the City. Councilmembers Hudson, Beaton, and Mayor Donovan thanked Erin for her work with the City and the IOS Program.
- B. Defunding the Police Department, Flock Camera, and Staffing: Chief Christman read a prepared statement addressing recent public comments about Police staffing (defunding), the removal of Flock license plate reader cameras, and reinvesting those funds in alternatives to public safety. He believe those actions would result in harmful consequences to the City. The Police Department is currently understaffed and Washington state is ranked 51<sup>st</sup> in the nation for Police staffing. He spoke about reinstating the traffic division and provided collision and traffic stop statistics. He provided examples of the negative effects of the Minneapolis police defunding experiment beginning in 2020. He spoke about the funding allocation of the levy lid lift revenue and the hiring process for a Police Officer as well as the collaboration with the IOS staff/program.

Flock License Plate Reader cameras were addressed: Concerns have been presented about the potential misuse of the information gathered with Flock cameras. Flock audits report that there have been no data breaches by Federal agencies. He relayed many success stories as a result of information provided by the Flock camera data as well as access security protocols.

Command Vehicle: Chief Christman spoke about the need for a Command vehicle for incidents such as the bridge collapse, flood events and other large-scale incidents and community events.

Council and staff engaged in discussions about Flock cameras, the command vehicle, expanding IOS staffing outside regular daytime hours, and the desired number of Police Officers.

**6. Agenda Requests**

- None

**7. Miscellaneous**

- An ordinance to adopt policies for enacting additional sales and use tax for criminal justice purposes will be brought to Council for consideration at the January 14<sup>th</sup> Council meeting.
- Mr. Rogerson spoke about a quasi-judicial matter that will be presented at the January 14<sup>th</sup> Council meeting.

**8. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Submitted by: Becky Jensen, City Clerk