

Members OK Reimagine Policing Plan

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Boulder City Council on Thursday evening unanimously approved the Reimagine Policing Plan recently released by Police Chief Maris Herold.

The new plan will shift Boulder's policing approach toward a proactive model of addressing crime rather than a reactive model of responding to calls.

The plan was originally conceived as an update to the Police Department Master Plan, but its name was changed to the Reimagine Policing project after several community members expressed concern about the name "master plan," saying the word "master" had a problematic history.

The Council's decision came after a bevy of public testimony, most of which was strongly supportive of the Reimagine Policing Plan, the Boulder Police Department and Herold.

Some of the speakers were people who have previously said they favor more policing, law enforcement and criminal accountability, particularly with regard to encampments and unhoused residents.

Terri Brncic, a 2023 city council candidate, expressed support for the plan, saying it "supports evidence-based strategies that will effectively and ethically address crime in a proactive manner." She is one of the parents behind the Safe Zones 4 Kids ballot initiative that will be on the ballot this fall and has expressed concern about safety around schools.

Members of the Boulder Chamber and the Downtown Boulder Partnership also spoke glowingly of the plan.

"We have a problem in Boulder," said Boulder Chamber President John Tayer, who said that crime in Boulder is hurting businesses and that the plan is a "research-based, data-based" and responsive way to address this problem.

Terri Takata-Smith, interim director of the Downtown Boulder Partnership, said the Downtown Boulder board also endorses the plan, and she hopes to see more "safe and welcoming public spaces."

The 48-page plan was developed based on several rounds of community feedback. During a presentation, staff said the city made an effort to engage with communities that are disproportionately impacted by policing. Part of the goal of the policing plan is to reduce crime and arrests and minimize the disproportionate impacts of policing on communities of color.

The plan will also include a new performance metric system to identify officer misconduct, more efforts to recruit diverse officers and an online rating tool for community members to rate their interactions with Boulder police.

Council member feedback on the plan was almost entirely celebratory.

"I deeply appreciate many aspects of this plan, especially the portion that describes holistic governance and how it plays into crime prevention," said Councilmember Lauren Folkerts. "A tremendous amount of work is needed, and it will not end with the finalization of this plan. This is the first step and we will need to continue to evaluate what's working, what's not working, and make adjustments."

Mayor Aaron Brockett praised the "innovative, progressive and even visionary" plan, saying it is "moving us toward a 21st century vision of policing."

One councilmember, Nicole Speer, acknowledged the trauma and difficulty of policing while also offering feedback on the plan. For example, she would have liked to see the plan include more acknowledgement of institutional racism and "systemic overpolicing" of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled and low-income communities. But she emphasized that she supported the vision of the plan.

"Whether we're people who feel safe with police or people who don't feel safe with police, we all want this plan to succeed," she said.