

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NINA MOINI: Tonight marks the start of a series of community listening sessions in Minneapolis to get input on what residents want in a new police chief. You might remember Chief Brian O'Hara resigned in May after allegations that he interfered with an investigation into his conduct. And now the city is in the middle of the process of selecting a new chief. Council Member Michael Rainville represents the downtown area and is hosting a listening session tonight. Thanks for being with us, Council Member Rainville.

MICHAEL RAINVILLE: You're welcome. How are you doing today?

NINA MOINI: I'm doing OK. Thank you for asking. I'm also joined by Council Member LaTrisha Vetaw, who represents parts of North Minneapolis. She's also hosting a listening session tomorrow night. Thanks for being with us as well, Council Member Vetaw.

LATRISHA VETAW: Thank you for having me.

NINA MOINI: I'd love to start with you, Council Member Rainville. We talked about part of the downtown area where you represent. What are you hearing from residents in your particular ward and all the parts of your ward when it comes to what they want to see in a police chief?

MICHAEL RAINVILLE: Well, what I'm hearing is that managing a budget is really, really a big skill that we have to have. The last chief did not manage the budget well. The police have the second largest budget in the city, the largest being public works. So we have to really be-- have a candidate who is fiscally able to manage a very large budget, almost a quarter billion dollars.

NINA MOINI: You're referring, what, MPD--

MICHAEL RAINVILLE: Excuse me, quarter million.

NINA MOINI: Yep.

MICHAEL RAINVILLE: 250 million. Yep.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. And you're referring in part I guess to when MPD went around \$23 million over budget due to overtime costs. The chief at the time said that was because of different factors like Operation Metro Surge and an influx of federal agents to the area might have had to do with that. Mayor Frey, Mayor Jacob Frey, also seems to say that factoring in more money is the way to handle it and didn't seem to blame the former chief.

But as we are talking about a new police chief, Council Member Vetaw, how do you want a new chief to handle over time demand?

**LATRISHA
VETAW:**

So I-- like Council Member Rainville, I've been hearing from constituents that already being \$20 million over the budget this year is concerning to North Minneapolis residents. And I'm not hearing people say that the police department shouldn't cost us money, but they want to see what we get in return for that money. People want to make sure that police officers are available to show up when they need them, that we have good police officers, and that they're being trained well. And they that it's going to cost, but they want to make sure that we understand what the costs mean.

NINA MOINI:

Council Member Rainville, we talked about fiscal responsibility a little bit, but I also want to talk about some recurring issues and themes that seem to pop up. This weekend, we saw a protest involving far right influencer Jake Lang get pretty violent there in a part that you represent of the city. There were several arrests from both Jake Lang's crew, also counter-protesters, and there was some criticism about Minneapolis police appearing to help Lang while they were trying to control the crowd or help the crowd remain safe.

And obviously not the exact same type of situations but we've repeatedly seen these sort of protests and clashes over the last couple of years and heard about the difficulties as MPD talks about balancing helping a crowd stay safe and not appearing or being perceived as helping the cause which the crowd of Minneapolis residents is often protesting. So how would you like the next chief to handle these types of clashes, Council Member Rainville?

**MICHAEL
RAINVILLE:**

Sure. So I think the police did an excellent job there. The activists are never going to be happy. When they choose to be an activist, they choose to be unhappy all the time. And what the police did was they did not he was going to drive on the sidewalk. When they saw that, they immediately made sure everybody was safe, both the protesters and counter-protesters, and in their judgment, the best thing to do was to get those two vehicles out of there as soon as possible in the midst of a big fistfight and then arrest them when that arrest could be done safely. And that's what they did. In my opinion, it was excellent police work. I would expect the next chief to conduct his department in that same manner.

NINA MOINI:

During Operation Metro Search, Council Member Vetaw, former Chief Brian O'Hara was very outspoken against the way that Operation Metro Surge was being conducted and very outspoken about ensuring the federal government that local agencies or at least Minneapolis police wouldn't be cooperating with immigration actions. How do you expect the new chief to handle any future potential federal enforcement in Minneapolis?

**LATRISHA
VETAW:**

So, it's the same as chief-- former Chief Brian O'Hara. We have a separation agreement. We do not get involved in immigration action, and so I would expect the same.

I think what is going to be important for our next chief is to make sure that they continue the work that we're doing in Minneapolis around reform, that they continue the work that is happening internally and externally. Community engagement is a big part of the work that this next chief is going to be involved in, and we need a strong administrator. We need somebody who's going to run the department as a leader.

NINA MOINI:

Do you feel, Council Member Vetaw, that community trust or relationship building, which often can't be completely measured, but do you feel it's improved after the tenure of former Chief O'Hara?

LATRISHA VETAW: Yeah, I think in parts of our city, it certainly has improved. There's always going to be room for improvement, and we keep on with that. The men and women who show up every day to protect and serve as Minneapolis police officers are the core of that. They have to continue with community relations. They understand that, they're doing a good job at that, and I'm hoping that the next chief that we get will come in and honor that and continue doing the work. That is happening. Brian O'Hara has left, and that work is still happening under the leadership of our interim chief and all of our MPD leadership.

NINA MOINI: Council Member Rainville, we talked a little bit about those swelling overtime costs. The city says a lot of that has to do with a lack of staffing. And we know a court has ordered Mayor Jacob Frey to make sure the city is up to its minimum that it's supposed to be at of 731 sworn officers by January 4, 2027, which is really just around the corner. I guess as of June, there were only about 630 officers. So, Council Member Rainville, how do you expect the new chief to go about recruiting new officers?

MICHAEL RAINVILLE: Well, the new chief will have the benefit of an excellent recruitment Department. Chief O'Hara beefed that up. The officers that are in there are doing an excellent job.

With the leadership of Council Member Vetaw, we implemented a nice raise. So now we are in the top 5% or the top five of all the metropolitan police agencies who are competitive with salary. We have excellent opportunity for a career in policing. It's a very honorable job, and I'm sure the next chief will be able to step right in and continue the recruiting process.

The problem with overtime is that we are at a little over 900 officers in May of 2020. right now we're a little over 600, so we're still very short. And the overtime comes to play when we do our nine-- our 911 response, our daily patrols. On any given day, half of those shifts have to be filled with overtime because we just do not have enough police officers. So to your question, improvement will be very, very important.

NINA MOINI: I also wondered about the consent decree that the city of Minneapolis was under. A court ordered reform still is under an agreement with the state to make some pretty serious reforms, and when Chief Brian O'Hara came on from his position that he had prior in Newark, New Jersey, part of the reason he was hired at the time was because he had experience, all this experience with implementing a consent decree. We're years into it now. Council Member Vetaw, do you want to see the next chief have that same type of prior experience, and I would add, do you think it should be an internal or external hire?

LATRISHA VETAW: So I will just say I'm a fan of an internal hire. I think we have phenomenal police officers right now that would be great at this job and continuing the work on the consent decree, on reforms. So I'm a huge fan of an internal candidate. I'm hoping that we have a large pool of internal candidates to choose from.

There are certainly people who have done this work alongside former leadership, the consent decree work, the settlement agreement work. And that work continues. We're committed at city hall to making sure that everything in that settlement agreement happens, and our next chief certainly has to be on board for that.

NINA MOINI: Council Member Rainville, I'll give you the last question here. What do you want to see be done differently with a new chief, and do you think it should be an internal or external hire? Currently Bill Peterson, the first precinct inspector, is acting as chief.

MICHAEL RAINVILLE: Yes. So I'm with Council Member Vetaw about an internal candidate. We have excellent leadership potential within the ranks, and that person can step right in and continue to do the work that's being done.

There isn't a department in the United States of America that has changed more than the Minneapolis police department. There's a way different force than it was in 2020, and that's because of the internal leadership that we have right now.

So I think we're going to come up with a really good candidate. We'll see what the citizens want tonight. And tomorrow night. We're doing our outreach sessions and all five precincts, and we're going to listen very closely to what our citizens are looking for and to a new chief of police.

NINA MOINI: Council Members Rainville and Vetaw, thank you very much for your time. We appreciate it.

LATRISHA Thanks for having us.

VETAW:

MICHAEL Thank you.

RAINVILLE:

LATRISHA Bye.

VETAW:

NINA MOINI: Minneapolis city council members Michael Rainville and LaTrisha Vetaw there.