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*\*All quotes attributable to Defund WPD\**

### **Defund WPD Statements on August 11 Public Safety Committee and City Council Agenda Items**

Defund WPD will again make its presence felt at this week's [City Council](#) and Public Safety subcommittee meetings, mobilizing support for (and opposition to) petitions and orders related to police response to mental health calls, government and police accountability, and body cameras.

#### **Alternatives to policing non-criminal and mental health incidents**

Defund WPD supports the following agenda items that will make city government and the police department more transparent and accountable to the public: 8P, 11N, 11O and 22B. Agenda items 8Q and 12X address the city's need for non-police responses to non-violent incidents and mental health calls.

According to the WPD report on body cameras, Worcester police officers respond to a number of mental health incidents, though most officers lack the necessary training for effective de-escalation. The city witnessed this first-hand on July 22 when an officer responding to a mental health call [struck a man on a stretcher](#). Adding more evidence that Worcester is using police officers inefficiently, information provided to Defund WPD from one neighborhood "crime watch" meeting demonstrated that almost half of all police calls in that area were for "miscellaneous/non-criminal" incidents.

Some City Councilors have spent the last two months waving away allegations of misconduct in the WPD, saying that Worcester is not like other cities. The last three weeks, however, prove that it is. This week Worcester residents [learned of another misconduct lawsuit](#) stemming from a police officer striking and sicking a K-9 on a man, then falsifying the justification for his arrest. These frequent and costly lawsuits add up to millions of taxpayer dollars, which are better spent bolstering our underfunded city departments, schools, social services, and community programs. Worcester needs an alternative community-based response for calls involving mental health crises and a 911 alternative for non-emergency calls.

#### **Body cameras and private liability insurance for police**

Defund WPD is again mobilizing opposition to a permanent body camera program (11K, 11T, and 11U) and requiring officers take out personal liability insurance (12E). Defund WPD again reminds the public of the proven lack of efficacy demonstrated by these programs across the country. For body camera programs to influence police behavior, participating police departments require a culture of transparency and a reliable internal system for accountability. The City's shady history regarding transparency and accountability does not inspire confidence in this program. Compounding the issue, these cameras do not address policing's systemic racism and the over-criminalization of Black, Brown, and economically disadvantaged communities.

As for requiring police officers to purchase liability insurance, while this may be a well-intentioned proposal, the joining forces of police and private insurance companies, whose sole focus is maximizing profit, will be an enormous barrier to survivors of police violence seeking justice and is not only opposed by Defund WPD but also the Movement 4 Black Lives.

This list of reforms demonstrates that City Councilors still do not understand how the \$53 million police budget contributes to the societal factors that cause crime. Only divestment from the WPD and a re-investment in education, opportunities for young people, housing and economic aid will make Worcester the fair and just city that the Council says it already is.

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