

From: Durkan, Jenny <Jenny.Durkan@seattle.gov>
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 10:01 PM
To: Durkan, Jenny <Jenny.Durkan@seattle.gov>
Cc: Best, Carmen <Carmen.Best@seattle.gov>
Subject: RE: A message from the Chief

To the members of the Seattle Police Department,

I wanted to follow up on the Chief's note announcing her retirement from the Seattle Police Department. Know that while I understand the Chief's reasons, I accepted her decision with a very heavy heart. I have had the privilege to be with Chief Carmen Best in so many situations: with her family, at roll calls, in community meetings, and in nearly weekly meetings addressing public safety in Seattle. Her grit, grace and integrity have inspired me and made our city better. These last months, I knew Chief Best was the person to lead our city through this challenging time, to reimagine policing and community safety. Her leadership is unmatched nationwide, which is why it is a sad day for our City to lose her.

Carmen Best is still devoted to this department and our city. I regret deeply that she concluded that the best way to serve the city and help the department was a change in leadership, in the hope that would change the dynamics to move forward with the City Council.

For almost 30 years, Chief Carmen Best has worked to serve and protect the people of Seattle. She rose through the ranks during a time when doing so was unprecedented and extraordinary for a woman – particularly a Black woman. She defied institutional barriers and always sought to lift others up along the way. Over the course of her career on the force, she established herself as a respected national leader in community-based policing.

She demands the best from each of you, and has always fought to get you the resources needed to deliver. Like me, she believes in continuous improvement and knows that it is the choices and interactions of every individual officer and employee of SPD that determine the culture and reputation of the Seattle Police Department.

I have known the Chief for many years and worked with her when I was the Citizen Observer to the FRB, on various oversight committees when she was PIO, and while I was U.S. Attorney. But it her work as Chief that has really distinguished her nationally.

As Chief, she led the way on community policing. She implemented the Collaborative Policing Bureau and oversaw the relaunch of the City's Community Service Officers. She regularly met with community members and worked to advance a customer service approach to policing. She led the department toward a dramatic reduction in use of force against people in crisis as well as a decreased major crime rate in 2019. In addition, she hired more diverse officers to reflect the community, and in 2019, the department hired its most diverse class in recent memory at 39 percent people of color.

I have asked Deputy Chief Adrian Diaz to assume the role of Interim Chief in September. I am confident that Deputy Chief Diaz will succeed in his new role as Interim Chief. Serving nearly two decades in the department, he has led the innovative Collaborative Policing Bureau, and he will work with community members and officers to protect community safety and reimagine policing in Seattle.

We are living through one of the most uncertain and historic times in our City's history. We are in the midst of a global pandemic and the most challenging economic times. We also must rethink our approach to community safety and to invest more deeply in communities of color. The City, like its businesses and residents, is facing tough economic times. We also are at a moment when we must acknowledge the disparate generational impacts of policing on Black people and other communities of color. Chief Best and I had begun the work of rethinking our approach to community safety, and to invest more deeply in communities of color. That work must and will continue.

I know that this necessary public debate is personal for you, and that it affects not just your jobs. It impacts your families and the pride you have in serving the public. I also know it seems like the real strides SPD has made in recent years are going unrecognized. I talk to Chief Best every day, many times in the middle of the night when significant incidents occur. I know how hard you are working and all you are doing in each part of this city to serve the residents and businesses of Seattle. I believe your work and dedication is probably more important than it has ever been, and agree with Chief Best that the city needs and supports you. I also believe SPD will not just make it through these challenges but will come through as a stronger and better organization which continues to lead the nation.

We are fortunate that Deputy Chief Adrian Diaz was ready to step into the job and he will ensure SPD remains committed to continuing Chief Best's vision to build a police department that is centered around true community policing.

Thanks for all you're doing for the people of Seattle.

Sincerely,

Jenny