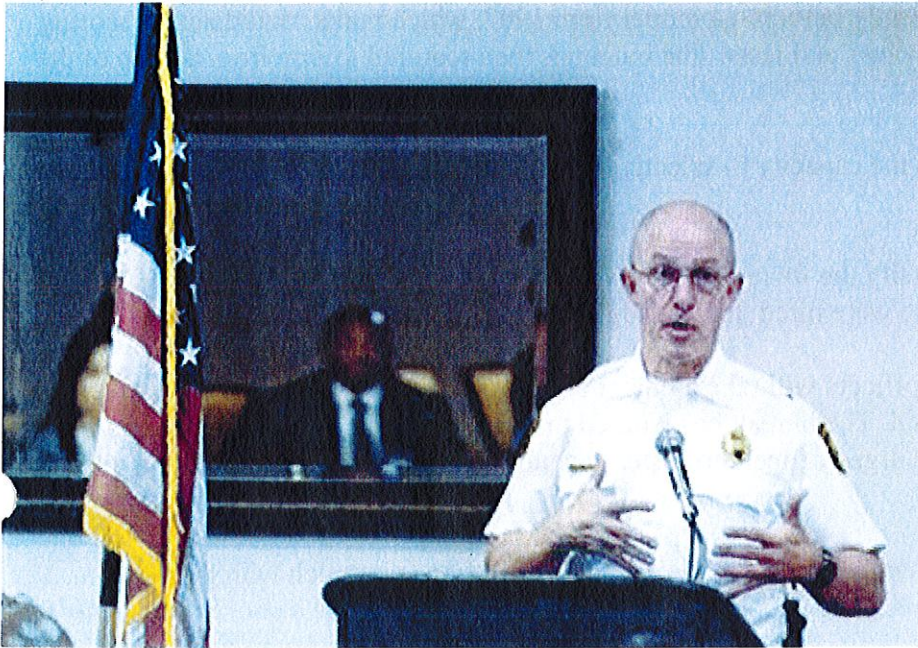


Subject:

FW: Special Breakfast Meeting in the Pgh Post Gazette

Pittsburgh police chief strives to hire more minority officers

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Doug Oster/Post-Gazette

Pittsburgh police Chief Cameron McLay speaks to the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania on Friday at the Rivers Club, Downtown.

By Julian Routh / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Facing dwindling numbers of officers, the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police is looking to recruit a more diverse force.

But to do that, it must continue to strengthen its relationship with the young black community, police Chief Cameron McLay told members of the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania.

"I'm going to need to make sure Pittsburgh police earns a relationship with young people of color in this community so that when they aspire to be a police officer, they want to be a police officer here," he said at a chamber meeting Friday morning.

Of all the problems Chief McLay has faced since taking over the department last year – including officer morale, community trust and a high homicide rate – diversifying the police force has been the hardest to solve, he said.

The police bureau has faced several allegations of discriminatory hiring practices that date to the early 1990s, when a federal judge struck down a quota system that required the department to hire in groups of four – one black man, one black woman, one white man and one white woman.

From 2001 to 2013, just 4 percent of officers hired by the city were African-American. Earlier this year, the city agreed to pay a total of about \$985,000 to more than 350 rejected police candidates from 2008 to 2014 who alleged they had been discriminated against during the hiring process.

Chief McLay said the police must “recruit differently, screen differently and hire differently,” which might require legislative help from city government.

The process for hiring new officers is currently based on a model from 1907, which ranks candidates by scoring them numerically on their success in interviews and tests. The bureau is then required to hire from the top of the list, Chief McLay said.

“By definition, that completely eliminates the capacity to selectively hire for important things like values,” he said.

It also hinders the bureau’s ability to diversify the force, which will soon be in greater need of officers. Chief McLay said a large number of officers who were hired 20 years ago will soon be eligible for retirement.

Recruiting a larger, more diverse class of officers will take a bigger training facility and greater trust between the police and communities of color, he said. The bureau has worked to develop relationships with schools and youth athletic clubs, and Chief McLay has urged officers to foster “mentoring relationships” with young people.

Doris Carson Williams, president of the chamber, said she believes Chief McLay is in touch with the black community.

“He’s got the right approach,” she said. “He’s developing relationships, and now it’s our turn to be supportive with him as well.”

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Join us for our PowerBreakfast Meeting, Friday, September 18, 2015, 7:30a.m. at the Rivers Club. Frank Coonelly, President of the Pittsburgh Pirates will be the guest speaker

Continuously improving business opportunities for African American business owners and professionals.