

Chief Chuck Lovell's Statement on Ongoing Demonstrations and Impacts

June 22, 2020

Portland is experiencing the fourth consecutive week of nightly demonstrations following the tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Our City has observed several thousands gather and march throughout the City in an awesome statement of unity for transformational change. These rallies and marches have been non-violent and impactful and we appreciate those who have engaged in the safe expression of rights to assemble and express free speech.

Unfortunately, there has been another group of several hundreds who have also gathered at a different location, but many of the group members have not engaged in lawful or constitutionally protected activities. It began when the Justice Center was targeted and sustained severe damage during a break-in and arson on May 29. Windows have continued to be shattered and officers have identified and arrested those responsible when they were able to.

PPB's Crowd Management Incident Commanders (CMICs) have tried a variety of methods to manage these groups at the Justice Center including:

- Attempting to speak to those in the crowd through the fence (which was reduced); attempts were met with objects thrown at officers,
- Withdrawing officers to non-visible positions,
- Requesting the crowd to self-manage those who are throwing projectiles or cutting through the security fencing,
- Providing repeated warnings to stop criminal activities or be subject to arrest, force, or crowd control munitions,
- Dispersing the crowd when an unlawful assembly or civil disturbance is declared and after repeated lawful orders to disperse, many do not,
- Making arrests and other strategies to try to increase public safety.

Rather than dispersing or following lawful orders, officers have been met with violence, including improvised explosives, rocks, glass bottles, ball bearings and marbles launched from slingshots, among other projectiles.

When officers were pulled back or out of sight in attempts to de-escalate the situation, the criminal activity often escalated to life safety issues, such as when fires were set next to buildings or when a business security officer was assaulted and injured.

Dozens of PPB and partner agency officers have been injured during the past several weeks, including sustaining concussions, a broken foot, lacerations, bruises, torn ligaments and more. We know some in the crowds have also sustained injuries as well. We are fortunate lives have not been lost despite the extremely hazardous events we have witnessed. Our primary objective remains the prioritization of life safety.

There are other costs and not all of them are financial. Our ability to focus on our primary work has been significantly hampered. This includes responding to calls for service. Many nights our officers, or partner agency officers who are covering calls, are only able to handle emergency calls and other non-emergency calls for service have to be significantly delayed or handled another time. Others have written to us about criminal activity in their neighborhood that is greatly affecting their livability, yet we cannot respond with appropriate resources. This is not the police service we strive for or the community expects.

Other important work is delayed as officers and investigators are unable to provide follow-up on critical cases because they are re-assigned to the evening events. Significant calls for service have not stopped; we have experienced six homicides in ten days, an increase in shootings, and other calls, such as domestic violence assaults, robberies, burglaries and traffic collisions.

Out of everything I have relayed here, the topic most will focus on is the financial impact. The full realized costs for the demonstrations are more than \$6.2 million at this time. This does not include yet to be determined costs, including straight time paid to sworn and professional staff members who are on-duty, but reassigned to these demonstrations. It also doesn't include unrealized expenses around materials, services and damage repairs.

This is a staggering sum, especially when we know many of us would rather those funds be used for the reinvestment so many truly desire. There may be those who will attempt to blame PPB for spending millions during a time when there are calls to cut the Police Bureau's budget.

We saw what happened on May 29 when businesses were looted and burned; how many millions has our community lost financially as they have been trying to recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic? We cannot afford to not respond with public safety personnel during this critical time.

I have been spending as much time as possible both in the community and with the officers who have been working for weeks on end. I hear many community members who want us to move forward with system change and accountability. Internally, our members want some time off to see their loved ones and engage in basic responsibilities that we all share.

We understand the community's desire for reform in law enforcement across the nation; we have already implemented many suggested changes. That work is outlined here: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/article/762929>

However, we know our work is not done and we must continue to meet the community's expectations. To move forward, we must shift our focus and resources into productive collaboration and actions alongside the community. We cannot do this effectively if the nightly criminal acts and violence continue to pose instability and threat to our community and critical infrastructure.