

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY OBSERVER REPORT

### Special Meeting of the Tacoma City Council

December 28, 2020

Observer: Lydia Zepeda

Meeting called to order at 9:04 am

Present: Mayor Woodards, and Council members Hines, Hunter, McCarthy, Thoms, Ushka, and Walker  
Absent: Council members Beale and Blocker

Also present: Susan Haigh, Elizabeth Pauli (City Manager) and 83 members of the public.

Motion to convene an executive session passed unanimously to discuss the candidates for TPD chief no more than 15 minutes.

Council returned to public session at 9:26am

Council member Blocker present.

Agenda: Discuss the appointment of Chief of Police for Tacoma Police Department (TPD).

Elizabeth Pauli: presented her conclusion of search process and her decision about which of six candidates she will hire. Her conclusion is to **appoint assistant chief Mike Ake as interim chief of the TPD.**

There were two conflicting viewpoints reflected by the community: the need for continuity and the need for immediate change to pursue an anti-racist police department. Ms. Pauli believes Mike Ake understands the need for acknowledgement and need for change. He can continue to provide leadership. Interim designation is due to community concern that an internal candidate cannot make transformation change. She states Ake is already making transformational change.

**Michael Ake's bio:** Mike Ake is currently the Assistant Chief of the Administrative Services Bureau for the Tacoma Police Department, where he has served since 1989. He is also the Director of Personnel and Policy (holding the rank of Colonel) in the Washington National Guard. Assistant Chief Ake holds a Master of Arts degree in Organizational Leadership from Brandman University and a second Master of Arts degree in Strategic Studies from the Army War College. Mike was born in South Korea and emigrated to the US.

Mayor Woodards: expressed thanks to community for their participation.

Ushka: expressed thanks to City Manager Pauli and everyone who participated.

Hunter: Stated that we need to be supportive of our police chief and that hiring someone we cannot meet personally due to pandemic is problematic. She confirmed that the City Council will not vote because it is the City Manager who is appointing Mike Ake as an interim chief.

Walker: Supports path forward and looks forward to working with the interim chief.

McCarthy: Acknowledges Chief Ramsdell's years of service and his work on transformational change. He stated that the City Council hires the City Manager and she hires everyone else. Many in the community thought that an external candidate would be best, but Chief Ake rose to the top. The mandates the City

Council have put on the City Manager and staff to pivot the TPD are difficult on top of COVID-19 and the high crime rate.

Thoms: Stated that the changes that are needed to make change are internal.

Hines: Stated that hiring the chief is just one step in the process for transformation of the TPD to make it safer for everyone.

Walker: Offered her thanks to the City Manager and everyone who participated. Acknowledged the concerns about an internal candidate but indicated that the City Manager is an internal candidate and he believes she is doing a great job. Asked the community to be engaged in being supportive as well as pushing for change.

Woodards: Expressed thanks to the City Manager. She stated that the hiring process has been especially difficult during COVID. The Mayor expressed gratitude for six excellent candidates, as well as the Tacoma police who are dealing with difficult times. She stated she trusts that Mike Ake will be able to make transformation “with” the TPD, not “to.” She indicated that Chief Ramsdell will be honored in January for his years of service.

Elizabeth Pauli: Introduced Chief Ake, thanked him for being willing to step into an interim role and to be a leader for transformational change. She highlighted his spontaneous answers to her questions. He stated that for making change, if don’t take into account the context, we will go down the same path. He stated he believed in community policing as a practice not as a division or patrol. When asked about third party oversight, he said why would we not have it? His stated his role model is Colin Powell because despite the racism he experienced he was able to lead professionally and honorably. He stated he knows personally the pain of marginalization having been marginalized for being an immigrant. He stated that it is important to step out of position and act as a good human being. He wants to be a leader to show the nation what right looks like.

Mike Ake: Affirmed his commitment to the community, to the TPD, and to Chief Ramsdell for his 35 years of service. He looks forward to building a model for safety for the community, to working with City Council, Mayor and community. He stated that we have an opportunity to become leaders locally, regionally and nationally in how a policing should be done. He offers his gratitude for being entrusted with leadership.

The City Council voted to excuse Council Member Beale.

The City Council adjourned at 10:09am