

From: [Mary Lanham](#)
To: [CouncilHearing \(CI-StPaul\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment, Truth in Taxation Public Hearing
Date: Monday, November 30, 2020 5:27:36 PM

Dear City Councilmembers,

I am a resident of Ward 3 writing in support of reducing funding to the Saint Paul Police Department, in 2021 and beyond. Specifically, I urge you to follow the community-led recommendations laid out in an [advisory letter](#) co-authored by Root & Restore Saint Paul and signed by over fifteen respected community organizations.

Last year's supplemental public safety budget was a first step in the right direction – but true divestment is vital to creating a Saint Paul where safety is in the hands of the community, not a militarized and biased police force.

While national attention has focused on Minneapolis during the past months, we in the Twin Cities know we live in an intertwined community. This is part of what makes our cities a vibrant and beloved home. But we also share the same systemic problems. The SPPD's fatal use of force rate is almost double the national average, and its deadly force rate for Black people is nearly three times the national average.

The murder of George Floyd, even after so many reforms to policing in the Twin Cities, shows undeniably that a different kind of change is required to save lives. A proposed general fund that allocates 32 percent of the city's budget to policing is unacceptable given the urgency of change.

Saint Paul's COVID-19 response has made budget cuts a necessity – but in a post-pandemic era, it seems counterproductive to cut public health spending by almost 17 percent while reducing police funding by only 0.8 percent. This is just one example of many cuts to the community services that actually address underlying challenges to public safety and health.

The City Council has an opportunity to implement deep change in Saint Paul. I support the leadership of my neighbors who are asking you to prioritize community initiatives and well-being, instead of maintaining a status quo we know is harmful and ineffective.

Respectfully,

Mary Lanham
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