

**Jason Lando**  
**Oakland Police Chief – Candidate**  
**Supplemental questions for public release**  
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**Please explain how you embody being a reform-minded leader, able to rebuild trust and nurture legitimacy by actively seeking to modernize the policing model, embracing and advancing the principles of procedural justice.**

In 2014, I was selected by then-Pittsburgh Police Chief Cameron McLay to serve as one of the Police Bureau's representatives in the National Initiative for Building Community Trust & Justice. As part of Pittsburgh's involvement in this initiative, my team designed and implemented a 3-year training initiative in the areas of procedural justice, de-escalation, and implicit bias for all 1,000 Pittsburgh Police officers. To be transparent about what we were teaching our officers, our team also designed a community version of the training. The community training continues today and brings officers and citizens together for daylong workshops that help break down the barriers that often exist between the two.

Late in 2014, I was promoted to the rank of Commander and assigned to the Zone 6 police station in the West End of the city. Zone 6 had a low violent crime rate and a high level of community engagement and trust. Conversely, the Zone 5 police station in the East End of the city was well known for its disproportionate amount of violent crime, a number of high profile incidents between police and residents, lack of meaningful community engagement, and low officer morale. I previously worked in Zone 5 as a Sergeant and then as a Lieutenant, so I was keenly aware of the challenges.

Had I remained at Zone 6, I likely would have enjoyed a fairly low-stress existence, but I accepted the commander position not for the title or the pay increase, but because I wanted to make a significant impact with officers and community members who needed an ethical, collaborative, and engaged leader. Shortly after my promotion to Commander, the Zone 5 position became vacant due to a retirement. I requested a transfer back to Zone 5 so I could begin to implement those changes.

In March of 2015, I assumed command of Pittsburgh's Zone 5 police station. On day one, we began working to change how officers and residents interacted with each other. We focused less on traditional "law & order" policing and more on engaging residents in positive, collaborative ways. We crafted our engagement and enforcement efforts around the wants and needs of the community. We started a comprehensive youth engagement program that paired at-risk teens with officers for one-on-one conversations and role-reversal scenarios. Officers were empowered to work with residents to help them creatively solve problems and were recognized for going above and beyond. Officers who engaged in misconduct or other unacceptable behavior were held accountable. Community stakeholders noticed the shift in culture and showed their appreciation by offering resources and support. Cooperation went up and complaints dropped 40% in one year.

Changing the culture of an organization isn't magic, and it doesn't happen overnight. I knew if I wanted to affect positive, meaningful change, it was going to take a long-term commitment and a willingness to be highly responsive and responsible to both my community and my officers. Every decision I made, every policy I enacted, and every initiative we started was done through the lens of the (4) pillars of Procedural Justice: Voice, Neutrality, Respect, and Trustworthiness. As one of the lead trainers for PJ in Pittsburgh, I believe strongly in practicing what I preach.

As we began changing how we engaged with our communities in Zone 5, I made sure to model the behavior I expected from my officers. I didn't just send officers to community events, but I attended events with them and made personal introductions to community leaders and residents. I wanted my officers to understand the importance of getting to know residents on a personal level. When we created new initiatives, I brought police officers and community members to the table to discuss how these programs would work and to solicit input. With buy-in from both sides, we were able to create long-lasting programs that brought our officers and residents closer together. When misunderstandings arose between officers and residents, I used those situations as teachable moments by bringing all parties to my office for transparent discussions about what occurred. Citizens usually left feeling as though their voices were heard, and our officers left with a deeper understanding of how their words and actions in the street have a profound impact on those we serve.

Much like many younger officers today, when I was new to the job, I believed that arrests and citations were the primary means by which we made our neighborhoods safer. As I matured throughout my career and formed relationships with people in the community, I began to see our role as police officers much differently. Crime fighting is and always will be important, but there are far more ways to make our neighborhoods safer and to build legitimacy in our profession than by simply taking people to jail. We as the police must adopt Procedural Justice as our guiding principal. This is the philosophy I use to guide my daily decision-making and the philosophy I would bring to Oakland as the next Chief of Police.

**Please explain your ability to work with and establish relationships with a wide range of diverse stakeholders and communities, as well strategic partners, officials, colleagues, and the media.**

In both my current role as Commander of the Narcotics & Vice Unit as well as my prior role as Commander of Zone 5, the ability to work collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders was critical to accomplishing our goals. Below are a few examples of initiatives I implemented over the past six years that brought together diverse groups to effectively address important issues.

**Commander's Cabinet**

The Commander's Cabinet is a police-community working group that I started shortly after assuming command of the Zone 5 police station. I worked with local community leaders to identify residents, school officials, faith leaders, youth, elected officials, and local activists that represented each of the neighborhoods in Zone 5. Every other month our group would come together for lunch or dinner, followed by a presentation relevant to police and community. We closed each session with a round-table discussion on issues or concerns that were important to our members. The members of the Cabinet helped guide me in my decision-making about important community issues as it related to enforcement and engagement.

**Community Walkabouts**

On occasion when we experienced a surge in criminal activity in a concentrated area, I organized "community walkabouts" to assess and address the issues using a multi-disciplinary approach. These events required collaboration on the part of a number of internal and external partners, to include: law enforcement, residents, the Mayor's office, Public Works, Bureau of Building Inspection, Bureau of Fire, business owners, our State Representative's office and the City Councilperson for that district. As a team we would canvass the entire area in question and identify problems, assigning them to the appropriate department. Public Works boarded abandoned homes and cut down high grass that was often used to hide guns and drugs. Building inspectors issued citations to nuisance properties, the light department replaced dim or burned-out streetlights with powerful LED lighting, to act as a deterrent to the criminal element at night. Our officers conducted surveillance and arrested drug dealers in the area. Working together, we were able to address issues that made residents feel unsafe and ultimately drive down crime in the area.

**Nuisance Bar Task Force**

In 2019 I was transferred to police headquarters to lead our Narcotics & Vice Unit. One of the many responsibilities of our office is to investigate bars and nightclubs suspected of engaging in illegal activity. One of the challenges we face is the limited power we as police have when it comes to holding these establishments accountable. To be effective, we had to engage other partners who had greater enforcement capabilities.

Working with supervisors in the unit, we convened a Nuisance Bar Task Force. The NBTF is represented by Pittsburgh Police, PA Liquor Control Enforcement, Allegheny County Sheriff's Office, PA Board of Probation & Parole, Allegheny County Health Department, Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire, and our District Attorney's Office. On a monthly basis our team comes together to conduct compliance checks and/or enforcement actions based upon the number of complaints received from the community, as well as ongoing investigations we conduct inside the bars. Working together as a team, we have been able to cite and/or close various establishments for violations that fall under the purview of one or more of our partner agencies. The goal is neighborhood safety and we could not accomplish that without the teamwork and collaboration of each of those organizations.

**Media**

Regarding media, I believe in maintaining a strong working relationship. My philosophy is that the media is going to run a story with or without our input. Whenever possible, I would rather be afforded the opportunity to weigh-in on matters involving our department and our officers. I have also found that when we establish those good working relationships, members of the media are more likely to reciprocate by allowing us to tell our stories. *The following are two examples:*

<https://youtu.be/gTDhIQwNBSc>

<https://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2019/03/15/Hands-down-lets-talk-Pittsburgh-police-Homewood-tensions-engagement-sessions/stories/201903150096>

**Please explain your demonstrated passion for and leadership resulting in significant crime reduction.**

When it comes to crime reduction strategies, we must work in partnership with community leaders and residents. I believe one of the reasons for the tension and mistrust we are currently seeing across the country between police and citizens has a lot to do with our crime-fighting strategies. Traditionally, we have policed *over* communities rather than in *partnership* with them. This is evident in the pushback we often receive from some of our tactics and enforcement efforts. To be viewed as legitimate by the people we serve, police departments must view their relationship with the community as a team effort. Residents need us to make their communities safe, and we need them to help us solve crimes.

In my role as Commander in Zone 5, I met regularly with a number of community organizations to hear concerns and provide information on the efforts we were undertaking to help resolve crime issues in their communities. One such organization was the East Liberty Chamber of Commerce that for years had been trying to revitalize a rundown business district. The Chamber was comprised of several local business owners who were trying to attract a new hotel and several new shops and restaurants. The prospective tenants were hesitant to commit to the area due to the open-air drug sales and violence that plagued the business corridor.

Upon hearing these concerns, I asked shift supervisors, beat officers, and bicycle officers to attend follow-up meetings with me. I wanted the officers to hear the concerns first-hand, so they understood the problem, the goal, and what we were trying to accomplish. We partnered with current business owners to secure access to vacant offices and storefronts where we could setup surveillance. Detectives watched drug deals and made arrests. When the detectives were not working, we supplemented their efforts by assigning foot beats and bike patrols to the hot spots as a visible deterrent to the criminal element. We worked with the city to place "no parking" signs in front of nuisance businesses where drug dealers would park out front and loiter, conducting their deals. Finally, we met with landlords and owners of the businesses that we believed to be attracting the criminal element and provided them with advice on how to be good community partners. The alternative if they elected to continue operating their establishments as a nuisance was to face enforcement actions by law enforcement and our external partners. Most businesses heeded our advice and stopped selling drug paraphernalia, posted "no loitering" signs, and installed security cameras.

Within a few months, we were able to make remarkable strides. The chamber members reported a marked decrease in drug activity and other quality of life crimes in the area. Within a year, the new hotel opened, as did several new businesses.

This is just one example of how we were able to reduce crime and increase community safety through the use of strong leadership coupled with the use of Procedural Justice principles. By giving community members a voice, being honest and transparent with business owners, and being highly responsive to community concerns, we were able to achieve impressive results.