

## Expanding External Agency Funding by Connor Allen

City leaders seem to be scratching their heads trying to figure out how Louisville should respond to stop the significant uptick in crime over the past couple years. Much of the city's efforts to date have revolved around increasing the resources available to Louisville Metro Police Department by expanding the department's technological surveillance capabilities (see shotspotter) and manpower.

Despite the Police Department [receiving 27%](#) of the city's discretionary funds in 2016, [28% in 2015](#), and [26% in 2014](#), the city has seen a historic increase in homicides, drug overdoses and violent crime. Yet there continue to be members of Metro Council [advocating for significant increases](#) in police resources.

**Instead of investing more money to lock up people who have broken the law, the city should put more time and money into addressing the conditions that lead people to commit crime in the first place.**

Some may decry this approach as soft on crime, and admittedly, it is a more compassionate way of ensuring public safety. Often lost in the punitive philosophy behind the "soft on crime" argument is the simple effectiveness of social programs in addressing homelessness, drug addiction and poverty to ease the burden on police resources. Even within the police department there is recognition that we can't police our way out of this problem.

At a meeting of Metro Council's Public Safety Committee on March 1, Police Chief Stephen Conrad [told the committee](#):

*"It is important we are making the kind of investment in long term strategies or we are dooming ourselves to more of the same. We can continue to be in those neighborhoods and we can continue to arrest violent offenders, and we have seen all too often that those violent offenders find their way back to our streets very very quickly and they are committing those crimes again. We have got to do our job to invest our time and invest our money and invest our talents in addressing the root causes of violence, or we are wasting our time and efforts."*

When asked whether recent increases in LMPD's overtime budget need to become permanent to address the uptick in homicides, Chief Conrad responded, (1:23:00)

*"I would argue that's not sustainable, I would argue that our officers would burn out, that that's not the best use of our time. I would also argue that we would find ourselves in situations where people in that community felt like they were being over-policed, and I think that to ask this council to come up with half a million or a million dollars a month in police overtime, to do something that may not work, would be a mistake."*

We will know where the city's priorities are soon, because the yearly budgeting process is about to begin. Mayor Greg Fischer must release his proposed budget to Metro Council by April 27. Once the mayor's budget is released, Metro Council has until June 30 to approve a final budget which will go into effect beginning July 1. **The city budget is one of the most effective ways that Metro government can prioritize a smart approach to tackling the root causes of crime.**

So what can the city government specifically do to move towards a more compassionate and effective approach to public safety?

One action would be to increase *External Agency Funds* in Metro's 2017-2018 budget. External Agency Funds (EAF) refer to the money that Metro Government provides to nonprofit organizations. External agency funding is administered through the Department of Community Services and the Department of Economic Development. Organizations are given funding for two primary categories, social service and arts programs.

Local nonprofits that apply for funding present proposals to a panel which decides what programs receive funding. Last year community based programs that received funding included domestic violence prevention, children's art education, youth mentoring, drug addiction treatment, homelessness prevention and employment training. [These programs](#) provide community solutions that address the root causes of crime and help provide victims and offenders alike opportunities to break the cycle of violence, and become happy successful members of society.

The problem with external agency funding is simply that there is not enough of it. Last year the [city of Louisville spent](#) a total \$752 million. Of that total just above \$2.9 million went to local nonprofits through EAF, a third of one percent of all Metro spending. In contrast LMPD, adult and juvenile corrections received a combined \$228.5 million in funding, or 30% of all Metro Spending.

While the city does spend tens of millions of dollars on government-run social service programs, it is not doing enough to help local nonprofits provide a more flexible and grassroots approach to crime prevention.

If you agree that as a city we should do more to provide resources for community solutions to social services to address the root causes of poverty, you can get involved at the local level. The day for the mayor's office to release its budget proposal is this Thursday (April 27). Metro Council has until June 30 to approve the city's final budget for the next year.

### **How you can get involved:**

#### **Learn more about the issues.**

The Jefferson County chapter of Kentuckians For The Commonwealth has produced a primer for those new to the issues, "[The People's Guide to the Budget.](#)" Follow local news outlets like

WFPL and The Courier-Journal to keep up with Metro Council's budget hearings. KFTC will continue to release updates on [social media](#) and KFTC's website.

**Talk about the Local Budget.**

With the constant drama of the Trump administration crowding headlines, it's easy to forget about what's happening in the Metro Council. But getting a political conversation started is how change is made.

**Contact Metro Council.**

You can find out who your councilperson is and how to contact them by going to [Glasscapitol.com](http://Glasscapitol.com). If you'd like to speak to Metro Council you can [sign up online](#).

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