



## MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 9, 2022

TO: City Council  
Mayor Ross

FROM: Chief of Police, Perry Phipps

SUBJECT: Staffing Plan, Mid Budget Revisions (Behavioral Health Specialist)

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For many years, those individuals in need of assistance or were experiencing an emergency called 911. This resulted in the response of first responders, typically police or fire. While this may be an effective way to ask for assistance and resolve issues in many cases, it does not effectively address the need to help when the need is for someone in a mental health crisis. Many have noted that the response should include a trained mental health professional to assist first responders in helping those in crisis. Studies have shown that approximately 10% of 911 responses are for those in a mental health crisis or have some degree of mental health illness.

In 2021, the State Legislature passed a series of police reform laws including one that attempted to address the police response to those in mental health crisis. This facilitated much discussion on how do we help those in need when no crime has been committed. It became apparent that there was a need to enhance the response of our police and fire departments by including a behavioral health specialist who would respond with police and fire to fill the gap in our service to an increasing population in our community.

With the assistance of Washington State Representative Lisa Callan, Mayor Ross and North Bend Mayor McFarland, and many others, the state legislature approved \$150,000 to fund a pilot program for one year. The funding became available on July 1, 2022, and the City is working with the Washington State Health Care Authority to process the funding. We are also in the final stages of hiring a behavioral health specialist who will be housed at the police department.

I have attached the Job Description for this position to help answer any questions that you may have.