

I served as the budget co-chair for the County Executive's Task Force to Reimagine Public Safety. This proposed operating budget for the Montgomery County Police Department falls far short of the Task Force's recommendations.

Our Task Force budget committee recommended real cuts to our police force, meaning hundreds of positions, not a few dozen. Our recommendation was data-driven and transparent, and we meant what we said. After a year of public statements and promises to "reimagine", the county now proposes to shift about \$5 million from the police budget to other public safety approaches, an amount that represents a little over 1% of the police operating budget.

Council President Hacker, you and I are neighbors. I know you are well aware of what happened in our neighborhood in 2018. A Montgomery County Police Officer out on an unrelated service call at the Three Oaks condos saw a Black man walking on the sidewalk. For no clear reason, the officer got out of his vehicle and attempted to detain the man. That man was a beloved resident and neighbor who took those walks almost every day. He also had cognitive issues that caused him to flee in fear from a police officer who he rightly perceived to be threatening and unreasonable.

The officer chased the man with his weapon drawn. He did not deescalate the situation, on the contrary he needlessly escalated. In the end, he murdered Robert White.

This proposed budget allocates \$283 million county dollars for nearly 1,000 sworn officers, plus hundreds more non-sworn personnel. That is too much money and too many police. Too many police means regular violence that traumatizes, maims, and kills innocent residents. Too many police means the county becomes a national embarrassment on NBC Nightly News. Too many police means our neighbors dead in the street.

The county will use what it pays for, for good or ill. When you stop paying for a massive force of armed people to demand public compliance, and start investing that money in our community systems and people, then you will achieve public safety. Until then, this budget tells me that nothing much is going to change.