

Promises made, some promises kept

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In the wake of the David Brame scandal 10 years ago, Tacoma city leaders, police officials and community members proposed changes and made promises to ensure that nothing similar happened again in Tacoma.

When the city's police chief fatally shot his wife, Crystal, and then himself, he exposed a troubled, divided department, holes in the city's domestic violence services and problems at City Hall. Trust in the Police Department and city government was damaged.

City leaders and community activists aimed to repair the trust, expand domestic violence services and improve the culture within the Police Department and its reputation with residents through a series of proposed changes. The city also made several promises to the family of Crystal Judson to settle a \$75 million lawsuit in 2005.

A one-stop center for domestic violence victims opened, training was provided to city employees and new hiring practices and policies were enacted within the Police Department.

Several of the changes came within the first few months. Others were put in place within a year or two but still others lingered, unfilled.

Over the years, The News Tribune has assembled the promises made and updated the public on which ones were kept and which were not. Below is the latest status report.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REFORMS **FULFILLED**

- **Open a city-county family justice center, also called a one-stop center, to help domestic violence victims.**

WHO WANTED IT: Tacoma and Pierce County leaders.

BACKGROUND: Domestic violence victims often had to go to more than two dozen places to navigate the courts and get social services that enabled them to leave their abusers. In other cities, family justice centers provided all the services in one location.

STATUS: The Crystal Judson Family Justice Center opened in Tacoma in mid-December 2005. Last year, 2,301 clients visited the center at 718 Court E, and its DV help line answered 4,555 calls, said Susan Adams, the center's longtime director. The center is funded by the city of Tacoma, Pierce County and federal grants. It also has established the Family Justice Center Foundation with the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation. Donations to the fund support the victim services provided to the center's clients.

- **New federal law tying federal funding to domestic violence programs and procedures.**

WHO WANTED IT: Crystal Judson's father, Lane Judson.

BACKGROUND: By his daughter's bedside after the shooting, Judson said he dreamed of a law that would have helped her as her marriage collapsed. He pushed legislation that would withhold federal funding from any agency that has no policy addressing domestic violence by employees.

STATUS: In 2005, Congress passed the Crystal Judson Brame Domestic Violence Protocol Program. The federal grant program provides money for law enforcement agencies to implement procedures domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking by police officers. Agencies that receive grant money must provide additional training each

year on police-perpetrated domestic violence. Nonprofit domestic violence and sexual assault organizations may provide that training. After two years, the agencies have to provide the U.S. Department of Justice a copy of its protocol and how it has been implemented.

- **Coordinate the Tacoma and Pierce County court systems.**

BACKGROUND: City and county courts operated independently but County Executive John Ladenburg believed they should be linked so that judges could treat perpetrators consistently and track them no matter where they committed crimes.

STATUS: District and municipal courts now use the same computer-based system, DISCUS, to manage cases. District and municipal courts statewide use the system as well. It allows court workers to learn of new and ongoing cases in other jurisdictions, said Chuck Ramey, Pierce County District Court administrator. Pierce County Superior Court operates through the LINX judicial records system, which district and municipal courts also can use.

- **A public education campaign about domestic violence.**

WHO WANTED IT: Tacoma residents, a City Council-created committee.

BACKGROUND: Domestic violence advocates said the public needed better education about the problem. City officials discussed creating a public education campaign, as did various community groups.

STATUS: The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department crafted a campaign to teach people that emotional abuse is unacceptable and to encourage friends, family members and co-workers to recognize the signs of domestic violence in their loved ones and call for help. The campaign involved posters displayed on buses and in women's restrooms in restaurants, retail stores and other high-profile locations. While some posters remain, the Health Department no longer works on the campaign or any other advertising effort regarding domestic violence prevention, said Edie Jeffers, communications and community relations manager for the department. In addition, domestic violence providers have done their own education and awareness campaigns. The city of Tacoma developed a website (tacomadvhelp.org) with information for domestic violence victims and crafted public service announcements about the issue, said Karin White, deputy director for the YWCA.

- **Better services for domestic violence victims in Pierce County suburbs.**

WHO WANTED IT: Pierce County and Tacoma officials, domestic violence victim advocates.

BACKGROUND: Increased services were part of a five-point plan announced by County Executive Ladenburg and City Council members Connie Ladenburg and Rick Talbert.

STATUS: Ten kiosks have opened throughout Pierce County to help domestic violence victims get temporary restraining orders without having to drive into Tacoma. The first kiosk opened in 2004 in Gig Harbor. In addition, several service providers, including the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center, the YWCA Pierce County and the Korean Women's Association, help victims from throughout the region. The Family Justice Center has an advocate who sees clients one morning a week at the Sheriff's Department's South Hill precinct, said Susan Adams, its director. The quality of the service has increased over the past 10 years with better coordination among the providers and veteran staff members, White said.

NOT FULFILLED

- **A coordinated, city-county system to track domestic violence perpetrators after they get out of jail.**

WHO WANTED IT: County Executive Ladenburg and City Council members Ladenburg and Talbert.

BACKGROUND: Pierce County has probation officers monitor perpetrators after release; in Tacoma, judges check on perpetrators. The two systems can't be coordinated unless perpetrators are tracked the same way.

STATUS: The courts continue to have different ways of monitoring perpetrators. Pierce County District Court has a domestic violence supervision unit in its probation department. The probation officers monitor perpetrators' compliance with court orders. Tacoma Municipal Court has a monitoring program in which judges keep track of compliance, said Mark Oldenburg, court administrator for Tacoma Municipal Court. The court has no probation officers, though it has requested money for them in past budgets.

PARTIALLY FULFILLED

- **An independent reporting system for victims of domestic violence involving city employees.**

WHO WANTED IT: Tacoma residents, a City Council-created committee, Crystal Judson's family.

BACKGROUND: Some victims of police-perpetrated domestic violence said they didn't feel safe reporting abuse to 911 or through other traditional channels such as domestic violence hotlines because they feared they were staffed by their abusers' friends. Domestic violence experts suggested creating a secure hotline not only for police spouses and partners, but also for partners of any city employee.

STATUS: No hotline was created but during mandatory domestic-violence training, city employees are given a list of outside resources, including the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center, the Korean's Women's Association and the YWCA, as well as the state and national domestic violence hotlines and the phone numbers for risk management. City domestic violence policies also address confidentiality.

- **More domestic violence victim advocates in Tacoma.**

WHO WANTED IT: Tacoma residents, city officials.

BACKGROUND: After the Brame shootings, calls to the city's domestic violence victim advocate increased 25 percent to 30 percent. City officials said they wanted better victim advocacy, perhaps even replacing the three paid advocates cut in 1999. Police officials told the City Council they would like to hire victim advocates as well.

STATUS: Initially, the city hired a part-time advocate to work with the full-time advocate in the city's Human Rights and Human Services Department. In November 2010, the city decided it no longer would have a dedicated domestic-violence victim advocate and instead would put money toward agencies that offer services to domestic-violence victims, Assistant City Manager Tansy Hayward said. The Crystal Judson Family Justice Center, the Korean Women's Association and the YWCA receive money from the city. In addition, competitive grants are available from the city Human Services Commission.

In the 2013-14 budget, the city dedicated \$1.1 million in money to the Family Justice Center, the Korean Women's Association and the YWCA, Hayward said. White, the deputy director for the YWCA, said advocates within the domestic violence agencies work directly with victims. "Collectively, the system has more entry points than it used to," she added.

- **Install a plaque reading: "The Family Justice Center is dedicated to the memory of Crystal Judson and other victims of domestic violence. Crystal Judson was fatally shot on April 26, 2003, by her estranged husband, the Chief of Police of Tacoma."**

WHO WANTED IT: Crystal Judson's family as part of the settlement of their lawsuit with the city.

STATUS: An 8-by-10-inch plaque was installed in the lobby of the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center. It reads: "Crystal Judson Family Justice Center — Dedicated to the memory of Crystal Judson — May all who walk through these doors find strength, courage, and hope."

- **Dedicate a page to Crystal Judson on the justice center's website.**

WHO WANTED IT: Crystal Judson's family as part of the settlement of their lawsuit with the city.

STATUS: The website (aplaceofhelp.com) mentions Crystal Judson on a page that provides an overview of the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center. No page is devoted just to her story.

CITY OF TACOMA REFORMS

FULFILLED

- **Investigate members of the police department and other city agencies suspected of violating administrative policies.**

WHO WANTED IT: State Attorney General Chris Gregoire, Washington State Patrol Chief Ronal Serpas, City Manager Jim Walton, Police Chief Don Ramsdell and Mayor Bill Baarsma.

BACKGROUND: After the Brame shootings, city officials promised that independent investigations would seek out wrongdoing in city departments, as well as unethical behavior or poor decisions that might have contributed to the tragedy. They've also promised to follow the investigation trail "wherever it may lead" and widen investigations when necessary.

STATUS: In 2003, the State Patrol conducted a criminal investigation into potential misconduct of Tacoma police officials and others related to the Brame scandal. No criminal charges resulted, but investigators said they uncovered potential administrative violations involving 33 police and city employees. State Patrol investigators spent five months in 2004 investigating the administrative violations. The records were not made public until October 2005 after court action by The News Tribune. Three employees were sanctioned as a result of the investigation.

- **An independent ethics board for the city.**

WHO WANTED IT: Seven City Council members expressed support for the idea, though some questioned how it would work.

BACKGROUND: A 2003 investigation by The News Tribune found the city ill-equipped to answer questions and resolve complaints about potential conflicts of interest among City Council members.

STATUS: The city created a five-member Board of Ethics in June 2006. The board reviews, investigates and makes recommendations about ethics-related complaints against the city manager, public utilities director, any member of the Public Utility Board or a city-elected official. The board also can issue advisory opinions on ethics issues raised by a city official and publish opinions on any matter within its authority.

Between 2008 and 2012, the board investigated and issued resolutions for 17 complaints, according to its website. One complaint has been filed so far this year but no resolution has been issued. (The complaints and resolutions are posted at www.cityoftacoma.org/Page.aspx?hid=19406.) No complaint has involved an allegation of domestic violence. Several raised potential conflict-of-interest issues; others followed and referenced The News Tribune stories.

- **Hire a city manager.**

WHO WANTED IT: City Council members.

BACKGROUND: The City Council fired City Manager Ray Corpuz in July 2003 and promoted Jim Walton, the longtime deputy city manager. The City Council, happy with the way Walton refocused the city's attention on solving a looming budget crisis, economic development and its neighborhoods, retained him until he retired in 2005.

STATUS: Fulfilled, eventually. The city hired Eric Anderson, then the chief administrator in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2005. Anderson served as the city manager until July 2011, when the City Council decided not to renew his contract. Anderson was replaced by T.C. Broadnax, an assistant city manager in San Antonio, Texas, in December 2011.

- **The city will return all personal photographs, videotapes and other personal items from the Brame case to Crystal Judson's family.**

WHO WANTED IT: Crystal Judson's family as part of its settlement with the city.

STATUS: Fulfilled. The City Attorney's Office has returned all the personal items from the case to the family.

- **Investigate all credible tips regarding public corruption in Tacoma and Pierce County.**

WHO MADE IT: Mark Ferbrache, special agent with the FBI's public corruption squad in Seattle.

BACKGROUND: When the State Patrol conducted a criminal investigation of potential misconduct by members of the Tacoma Police Department, detectives received tips that fell outside of their investigation and forwarded them to the FBI.

STATUS: The FBI case was closed without anyone being prosecuted, said Ayn Dietrich, spokeswoman for the FBI's Seattle office. She had no more information because the case's lead agent and others involved with the investigation have since retired.

TACOMA POLICE REFORMS

FULFILLED

- **The city will continue to make reasonable efforts to implement the recommendations in a sweeping 2001 performance audit of the police department by Carroll Buracker & Associates of Harrisonburg, Va.**

WHO WANTED IT: Crystal Judson's family as part of its settlement with the city.

BACKGROUND: A controversial, outside review of the police department was published in 2001. The 400-page Buracker audit made 131 recommendations for improving the department. Among other issues, it highlighted a patrol staffing schedule that led to one overlapping day – nicknamed "Fat Thursday" – when nearly everyone on the force was on duty.

STATUS: The department implemented 106 of the recommendations, including changes to the patrol schedule, and rejected 12 as either outdated or inappropriate. Chief Ramsdell folded the remaining 13 recommendations into a strategic plan he crafted in 2006. His plan highlighted 36 priorities for the department, including reducing the violent crime rate, rewriting the agency's policies and procedures and implementing new programs to improve the culture within the agency.

In a recent interview, Ramsdell said many of the priorities have been accomplished, including using data, technology and information better, creating programs and moving officers into positions that focus on the

community and Tacoma citizens, strengthening leadership within the department, providing oversight and training for current employees, increasing teamwork within the agency and with others and improving the management of the department. The department continues to work off the strategic plan.

According to the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, violent crime and property crime in Tacoma have dropped 27 percent between 2006 and 2011, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

- **The department will continue to make reasonable efforts at accreditation by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.**

WHO WANTED IT: Crystal Judson's family as part of its settlement with the city.

BACKGROUND: Accreditation is a voluntary designation given to law enforcement agencies that meet a series of nationally set standards. The standards cover all aspects of the agency, including operations, personnel structure and processes, management, and detainee and court-related activities.

STATUS: The police department earned international accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies in November 2010. As a result, it automatically received accreditation by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, Ramsdell said. The voluntary achievement lasts three years. Assessors from the accreditation commission will return to Tacoma in August to review the department's accreditation. The department anticipates being reaccredited in the fall for another three years.

- **Annual performance evaluations for rank-and-file officers and commanders.**

WHO WANTED IT: 2001 independent performance audit.

BACKGROUND: At the time, supervisors evaluated only new officers on probation and newly promoted officers.

STATUS: A committee of department staff members developed a written evaluation form and policies for the annual evaluations of all commissioned officers. It was implemented in 2009.

- **Early-warning system to spot problem officers and intervene with counseling or training.**

WHO WANTED IT: Recommendation in the 2001 performance audit.

BACKGROUND: Similar systems are computer-based and alert commanders to employees who repeatedly have difficulties with civilians.

STATUS: An early-warning system was put in place as one of several changes the department made as it worked toward accreditation. The department had some difficulties with its original software and has been using its current software since the end of 2011. The program is monitored by a lieutenant, who notifies the appropriate commander when an alert is triggered. The lieutenant makes sure action is taken and documented within the system.

- **The city will make reasonable efforts to "determine, establish and implement policies" on psychological screening of police recruits and fitness-for-duty evaluations of officers.**

WHO WANTED IT: Crystal Judson's family as part of its settlement with the city.

BACKGROUND: The department uses a hiring process that includes testing and psychological exams.

STATUS: The department implemented a comprehensive policy on fitness-for-duty evaluations. It also implemented a more formal checklist of hiring procedures and gives more attention to background checks.

- **Civilian oversight of the department.**

WHO WANTED IT: City Human Rights Commission, City Council advisory committee.

BACKGROUND: The human rights commission had proposed an independent office in City Hall to review Internal Affairs investigations of police officers and a voluntary board to monitor police policies and make recommendations about potential changes.

STATUS: The City Council adopted a watered-down version of the commission's proposal and negotiated with police labor unions. The seven-member Citizen Review Panel primarily focuses on reviewing police policies, reviewing citizen complaints about police policy and providing advice on policy matters to the City Council, city manager and police chief. The board also holds public hearings and meetings and hears monthly presentations from Ramsdell.

NOT FULFILLED

- **Hire an outsider to run the police department.**

WHO WANTED IT: Many Tacoma residents, City Manager Corpuz and later Interim City Manager Walton.

BACKGROUND: After David Brame's death, his assistant chief, Catherine Woodard, was named acting chief. She was replaced less than a week later after questions arose about why she accompanied Brame to pick up his children for a visit days before the shooting. Ramsdell, a respected veteran of the department who'd been rising through the ranks, was named acting chief May 1, 2003.

Many residents and leaders continued to call for an outsider to run the department in light of the unfolding scandal. Walton searched for candidates and narrowed the list to an outside finalist and Ramsdell. The day after the two were interviewed, the outside candidate withdrew and Walton made Ramsdell interim chief. Walton later clarified his position and said Ramsdell was the permanent chief.

STATUS: Ramsdell remains the chief of the department nearly 10 years later.

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Read more here: <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2013/04/21/2566622/promises-made-some-promises-kept.html#storylink=cpy>