



# NEWS RELEASE

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **City of Palo Alto Names Dennis Burns as New Police Chief**

**Palo Alto, CA** – After a national search and lengthy and multi-faceted review process, Palo Alto City Manager James Keene announced his recommendation of Dennis Burns as his selection to the position of Police Chief. After serving as Interim Police Chief since December 2008, Chief Burns will receive a base salary of \$178,573 and officially take the helm of the Police department on September 22, 2009, assuming formal confirmation by the City Council on September 21, 2009.

“The selection of the Police Chief is an extremely important decision at this point in time in Palo Alto,” said Keene. “Our Chief must be able to effectively work within three arenas, as a trusted professional capable of building strong relationships across the community, as an effective member of the City leadership team and as a Chief who commands the respect of the department.”

In February 2009, the City hired Bob Murray & Associates, an executive search firm in California experienced in Police Chief Recruitment. There were 48 candidates from all over the country and seven individuals were invited for interviews on July 17 with both a citizen panel and professional panel of evaluators. The two panels both recommended three local finalists, who then were interviewed by the City Manager, met the City’s Executive Leadership Team, underwent extensive background checks and suitability assessments and generated public comment and media reporting.

According to Ray Bacchetti a Palo Alto resident and member of the City's Human Relations Commission, the qualities of an organization radiate from the person at the top. "Dennis knows, in his bones as well as his head, that the mandate for the police comes from the community and that the awesome power of the police must --as an imperative, not just a rhetorical flourish -- derive from the trust of the community. He is able to listen—genuinely listen—and hear what citizens say and, when appropriate, takes it on board and adjusts behavior accordingly," said Bacchetti. "Dennis conveys integrity, caring, engagement and humanity in all he does."

"This has been a long and intensive recruitment process. In particular I want to thank the three finalists, Kenton Rainey, Police Chief of the City of Fairfield until September; Gregory Rothaus, Police Chief of the City of San Carlos and Dennis Burns, for the professionalism and patience they have shown throughout the process," stated Keene. "Throughout these many months, I have grown to appreciate each of them and the qualities and skill they have brought to the demanding task of public service as police professionals."

Burns attended San Jose State University where he earned his B.S. degree in Administration of Justice in 1981. In 1988, he received his Masters degree in Public Administration from the University of San Francisco. Dennis has also attended the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

Interim Police Chief Burns began his career with the Palo Alto Police Department in 1982. During his 27 years with the Department, he has worked all Patrol shifts, has served as Field Training Officer, a Detective and Detective Supervisor, a Crime Prevention Officer and an Academy TAC Officer.

"I believe we have a good police department in Palo Alto but we also need to change. The department has been subject to much criticism over the years, some of it deserved and some of it not. After all our considerations on the Police Chief appointment, what mattered most to me was who was most capable of effectively leading the change we need in Palo Alto," said Keene. "The job of Police Chief in Palo Alto is not for the faint of heart. I have made it clear to Dennis Burns that he will need to build on the strengths and good qualities of the department and lead the women and men of the Palo Alto Department in new directions. I am convinced that Dennis Burns is committed to that."

At Palo Alto, Burns progressed through the ranks of Agent, Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Captain; he was promoted to Assistant Chief in 2007. Since December 19, 2008, Burns has served as Interim

Police Chief, upon the retirement of Chief Lynne Johnson. As Police Chief, Burns will oversee an annual department budget of \$30 million and 162 professional and sworn staff members.

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For more information on the recruitment process and members of the interview panels, visit <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civica/press/display.asp?layout=1&Entry=452>