

Offered by Councilor Andrea Campbell

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O'Malley



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING INACCURACIES IN ANALYZE BOSTON'S CRIME INCIDENT REPORT DATASETS

WHEREAS: Analyze Boston, the city's public-facing, open data platform, contains details of all incidents that Boston police officers respond to; *and*

WHEREAS: Each year, Analyze Boston reports their findings in a Crime Incident Report, with the most recent report being published for the 2020 calendar year; *and*

WHEREAS: The Analyze Boston dataset includes information about when and where incidents occur as well as the types of incidents that occur, but does not include information about arrests, arraignments, or other information following initial law enforcement response; *and*

WHEREAS: Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ), the only independent, non-profit, statewide organization working exclusively to improve the juvenile justice and other youth serving systems in the state of Massachusetts, produces analyses of existing datasets and research on treatment of and outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice systems, including platforms that report on crime incident data; *and*

WHEREAS: In a letter to the sponsor's office dated February 25th, 2021, Citizens for Juvenile Justice detailed several concerning observations in regards to the datasets from the Crime Incident Reports in 2020 and 2019 which led them to conclude that the data is incorrect; *and*

WHEREAS: The Analyze Boston dataset for 2019 has 784,771 total incidents listed, and the 2020 dataset has 2,578,366 total incidents listed, while the data for each of the previous years listed around 100,000 incidents; *and*

WHEREAS: Citizens for Juvenile Justice found that each incident is duplicated between twenty and thirty times, with every field being identical in both the preview feature of the web portal and when downloading the data as a .csv file; *and*

WHEREAS: The 2020 and 2019 overall data have increased after the years have ended. The 2019 data listed 98,000 incidents on November 17, 2020, with incidents increasing to 662,000 by January 19, 2021, and to 784,000 by February 25, 2021; many of which were duplicates. Similarly, the 2020 data increased from

approximately 2.1 million incidents on January 2021 to 2.5 million by February 25, 2021; *and*

WHEREAS: There have been significant fluctuations in reports of unique incidents after the year has ended. In the 2020 data accessed on January 2021, there were 29,194 unique incidents, by comparison there were 90,855 unique incidents in the data accessed on February 25, 2021. While the later number of unique incidents is most aligned with the general trend, the fluctuation makes the data unreliable; *and*

WHEREAS: The Boston Police Department changed units of analysis and categorization of incidents for the year 2020, including the removal and consolidation of a substantial amount of offense descriptions into increasingly ambiguous categories which in turn obscures the police department's activities. For example, the consolidation of offenses previously named Burglary-Commercial-Attempt, Burglary-Commercial-Force, and Burglary-Commercial-No-Force into a single offense called Burglary-Commercial, eliminating the potential differentiation between offenses during data analysis; *and*

WHEREAS: Many offense descriptions were inexplicably renamed in 2020, such as Harassment to Harassment/Criminal Harassment; *and*

WHEREAS: Crime Incident Reports on Analyze Boston are updated regularly and the 2021 data to date has the same duplication issue; *and*

WHEREAS: All aforementioned issues create new and considerable barriers for quality data analysis and accurate policy advocacy by the public; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the Analyze Boston public platform's dataset concerning the Boston Police Department's response to incidents, including information on the accuracy of its data, units of analysis, categorization of incidents, and duplication of items. Representatives from Citizens for Juvenile Justice, the Boston Police Department, the Citywide Analytics Team, and the public shall be invited to testify.

Filed on: March 10, 2021