



Seattle City Council

Robert Kettle, District 7

August 21, 2026

From: Councilmember Robert E. Kettle

To: Mayor Katie B. Wilson

Re: Request for Written Statement of Reasons for Police Chief Removal

Pursuant to article 6 section 2 of the Seattle City Charter, the City Council request that you file a written statement of reason for the removal of Shon Barnes from the role of Chief of Police for the Seattle Police Department. This charter provision states the following: “the Mayor may remove the Chief of Police upon filing a statement of his or her reasons for so doing with the city council”. Your public discussion during the July 31 press conference and subsequent interviews included some vague reasons for removal of Chief Barnes from his role. However, you have not complied with the requirement for written statement that clearly and transparently explains the factual basis for your decisions. We ask that you file this written statement with the City Council no later than one week from today, by August 28th, 2026.

As the city chief executive, you made the decision to request Mr. Barnes’ resignation, and had he declined to resign, he would have been terminated from his employment. In doing so, you have exercised your removal authority under article 6 section 2 of the city charter, thereby invoking the requirement that you file a written statement of reasons with the City Council. That obligation cannot be avoided simply because the separation was ultimately documented as a resignation.

Importantly, the later execution of a severance agreement cannot be used as the shield to prevent the facts that led to the removal decision from being subject to public scrutiny if that were the case, it would allow the executive to functionally nullify the city charter. Whenever a mayor wishes to avoid filing the required written statement, the mayor could simply request the Chief of Police resignation, before issuing a formal notice of removal, undercutting the very protections the charter imposes.

Beyond preventing an official public record when required, a decision not to file the statement undermines the City Council’s legal and charter authority and opens the door to arbitrary and unsupported removal of the Chief of Police. Indeed, the purpose of this charter requirement is to ensure transparency and legislative oversight when the mayor exercises the authority to replace the Chief of Police.

While the decision to remove the Chief of Police is completely within your purview as the mayor, it is the role of City Council to exercise oversight and be informed of the reasons for that decision. It has been well documented that the City Council was not consulted about or given advance notice of Mr. Barnes removal from this position. Moving forward, the City Council and the people of Seattle have the right to know the specific reasons that led to such a significant decision and comprehensively assess this matter of great public interest and concern.

Robert E. Kettle
Seattle City Councilmember, District 7
Chair, Public Safety

CC: Joy Hollingsworth, Council President
Deputy Mayor Brian Surratt
Caedmon Cahill, General Counsel
Alison Holcomb, Executive Operations Manager – Public Safety
Chief Andre Sayles, SPD