

RESOLUTION
By Gordon, Ellison, and Schroeder

Opposing the use of “less lethal” weapons in Minneapolis.

Whereas, a class of weapons described as “less lethal,” including but not limited to chemical irritants, kinetic impact projectiles, and marking rounds have been used by police and other law enforcement against crowds of people protesting injustice and police violence in Minneapolis; and

Whereas, an interdisciplinary team from the University of Minnesota has documented numerous cases of severe bodily harm that were caused by the use of “less lethal” munitions in Minneapolis in 2020, and reported its findings to the Minneapolis City Council’s Public Health and Safety Committee on March 4, 2021; and

Whereas, that same University of Minnesota team found that “less lethal” weapons caused serious injuries to dozens of people, including bystanders, youth, and people peacefully protesting between May 26 and June 15 of 2020, including wounds as severe as eye trauma up to and including blindness, and traumatic brain injuries; and

Whereas, that same University of Minnesota team found that the use of “less lethal” weapons did not follow the manufacturer’s specifications, including being fired at crowds and being fired from an elevated position; and

Whereas, the Council’s Public Health & Safety Committee requested that the Minneapolis Police Department “provide a description of policy and procedure changes intended to eliminate the kinds of injuries caused by the use of ‘less lethal weapons’ described by the interdisciplinary team from the University of Minnesota, and to provide that information to the Public Health & Safety Committee at its regular meeting on April 1, 2021”; and

Whereas, the requested report from the Minneapolis Police Department on “less lethal” weapons has not been given to the Council or any Council committee, but is scheduled to be delivered to the Public Health & Safety Committee on April 22, 2021; and

Whereas, the 1925 Geneva Protocol categorized tear gas as a chemical warfare agent and banned its use in war shortly after World War I; and

Whereas, the Temporary Restraining Order stemming from the Minnesota Department of Human Rights’ ongoing investigation into patterns of racism within the Minneapolis Police Department that stipulates immediate changes “designed to stop ongoing irreparable harm to Black, Indigenous, and communities of color who have suffered generational pain and trauma as a result of systemic and institutional racism” identifies crowd control munitions as a topic of concern; and

Whereas, the use of “less lethal” weapons escalates protests, making already very difficult situations even more dangerous; and

Whereas, multiple lawsuits have been filed against the City of Minneapolis citing injuries caused by the Minneapolis Police Department’s use of “less lethal” weapons in 2020; and

Whereas, other cities, including Brooklyn Center, MN, and Philadelphia, PA, have prohibited the use of “less lethal” weapons on protests;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by The City Council of The City of Minneapolis:

That the Minneapolis City Council opposes any use of so-called “less lethal” weapons as crowd control against people in Minneapolis, and calls on the Mayor, the Police Chief, the Hennepin County Sheriff, the Governor, and any other person in a position of authority over law enforcement personnel to end the use of these weapons in Minneapolis.

Be It Further Resolved that the Minneapolis City Council directs the Minneapolis City Attorney’s Office to formally state by May 14, 2021, whether an ordinance passed by the Minneapolis City Council to prohibit or constrain the use of “less lethal” weapons by all Minneapolis employees would, under the existing Minneapolis Charter, prohibit or constrain the use of these weapons by the Minneapolis Police Department.

Be It Further Resolved that the Minneapolis City Council requests that the Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission form an investigative committee to discover 1) the extent of usage by Minneapolis Police or their other supporting forces, of these weapon types as identified in this resolution; 2) a summary of the reported effects of using these weapon types as identified in this resolution on the general Minneapolis population in the areas where use of these weapon types has been reported; and 3) how use of these weapon types as identified in this resolution by the City of Minneapolis have changed the quality of civil rights in the communities of Minneapolis.