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## Bealefeld named Baltimore police chief

Baltimore Business Journal - by Scott Dance Staff

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Mayor Sheila Dixon named interim Baltimore City Police Commissioner Frederick Bealefeld, a 26-year veteran of the department, as the city's permanent police chief Thursday.

Dixon chose Bealefeld over former Washington, D.C., police chief Charles Ramsey, she said at a 10 a.m. news conference at City Hall.

Bealefeld awaits confirmation from the City Council, many of whose members were at Dixon's side as she made the announcement. If approved, he will take the helm of a department facing a resurgence in the homicide rate, on pace to hit 300 for the year for the first time since 1999. He would also be the fifth city police commissioner in six years.

Dixon said her decision was based on Bealefeld's years of service as well as the energy, passion and drive she has observed in him. Bealefeld has led the department since July, when Dixon asked former Commissioner Leonard Hamm to step down.

Bealefeld is a fourth-generation police officer and most recently served as a deputy commissioner and chief of the criminal investigation unit. He started as a cadet in the department in 1981.

During his short tenure, the city has seen a drop in violent crime, Dixon and Bealefeld said, citing a drop in non-fatal shootings -- from 129 ahead of last year in July to 55 ahead of last year as of Thursday. There has also been a slight drop in the homicide rate, from

0.89 murders per day to 0.71 murders per day, since Bealefeld was named acting commissioner. There have been 231 murders in the city so far this year, up from 212 at this point in 2006.

Dixon said she spoke with many officers before making her decision and also noted a boost in morale in the department.

Bealefeld thanked Dixon for the opportunity to serve as commissioner, adding that the turnaround in violent crime since he took over the department is "unprecedented" but that "we have a long way to go."

Dixon interviewed eight candidates in a national search to replace Hamm, and Bealefeld and Ramsey were the front-runners. She said she had difficulty distinguishing the two, but it ultimately came down to intangible aspects of Bealefeld's energy and motives for the job, she said.

"I know he's going to be here a long time," Dixon said. "We need stability in the police department."

**Greater Baltimore Committee** CEO Donald Fry said Bealefeld has worked with the GBC many times to discuss public safety issues and was confident Bealefeld would make a strong effort to form a new strategy for the city.

"He's a very dedicated and determined individual who I think does have a strong fire and strategy not only for reducing homicides and violent crime, but also working collectively with other parts so the law enforcement community ... to bring about some real change," Fry said in an interview. "I'm convinced he's not satisfied with how things are going with public safety."

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