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Mayor's Office
City of Spokane



OFFICE OF
POLICE OMBUDSMAN
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FAX 509.625.6748

January 16, 2018

Mayor David Condon
City of Spokane
808 W. Spokane Falls Boulevard
Spokane, Washington 99201

RE: OPO and First Floor Space Design

Dear Mayor Condon,

The Office of Police Ombudsman ("OPO") has kept us updated on your plans to update City Hall's first floor. We support updating the first floor to make it more inviting to citizens and employees alike, while making better use of the space. We do have a concern that the planned changes may negatively impact the OPO and the services it provides to our citizens.

First, we are very grateful for the care and consideration given from your office to the OPO for the utilization of Conference Room 1-A. Council President Stuckart requested that conference room be set aside for OPO use as well. The use of this room has enabled the Ombudsman and the OPO staff to have conversations with citizens regarding their concerns, conduct private mediations with police officers, host confidential Internal Affairs Interviews with complainants who did not want to go to the police department, and regularly discuss material that is confidential in nature and subject to a non-disclosure agreement. This room was regularly, if not daily, used by the OPO in the conduct of their official duties.

It is our understanding that the current plans for the first floor in city hall will greatly reduce the OPO's office space, add glass walls instead of privacy barriers, and remove the use of Conference Room 1-A, as it will be divided into two phone booths. While all work that government employees conduct in Washington State is subject to public records requests and there is a drive to show the public open government, OPO work on open police cases are afforded confidentiality. In the course of case work, the OPO regularly reviews body camera footage that includes agitated people yelling profanity. The OPO also meets regularly with excited citizens who discuss sensitive matters that should be held privately out of concern for both the citizen and others passing by. We advocate that the OPO be provided consideration during your planning to be utilized as a private workspace due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed.

Additionally, conducting mediations are precarious because they are still fairly uncommon and are based on voluntary agreement by the complainant, the officer and the Chief of Police. The OPO strikes a delicate balance that creates a safe space for both the complaining citizen and the officer so that other citizens and officers are not discouraged from utilizing this process in the future.

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As such, it is important OPO maintain ample space that is easily accessible to the office that is private. Conference room 1-A has provided this. While not ideal, the OPO can accommodate a reduction the size of its office space, but either removing conference room 1-A or reducing the size of the meeting space will greatly hinder the work they do. We strongly urge you to consider keeping Conference Room 1-A as is and allow OPO to continue exclusive use of this room due to the sensitive nature of their work. We invite you to contact Mr. Logue or Ms. Omana to see the space and the impact of the changes to the services the OPO provides. Thank you for your consideration, we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



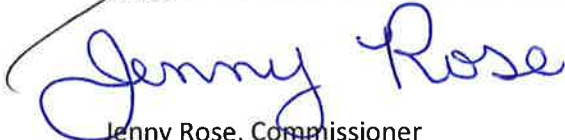
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Office of the Police Ombudsman Commission



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Elizabeth Kelley, Commissioner
Office of the Police Ombudsman Commission



Jenny Rose, Commissioner
Office of the Police Ombudsman Commission



James Wilburn Jr., Commissioner
Office of the Police Ombudsman Commission

cc: City Council
Office of Police Ombudsman