

## City of Spokane Office of Police Ombudsman Commission (OPOC)

### Meeting Minutes August 4, 2105

OPOC Attorney Breean Beggs called the meeting to order at 5:30pm in the City Council Chambers and welcomed the public.

Beggs welcomed recently appointed Commissioner, Aaron "A.J." VanderPol.

VanderPol introduced himself and explained his interest in serving as a commissioner.

Commissioner Scott Richter made a motion to appoint Commissioner Deb Conklin as Temporary Chair and VanderPol seconded. Motion passed.

Richter made motion to adopt proposed meeting agenda as amended by commission discussion and VanderPol seconded. Motion passed.

Richter made motion to invite Ladd Smith to sit with commissioners and participate in discussion but not vote, and VanderPol seconded. Motion passed.

Smith introduced himself as a newly nominated by Mayor, but not yet confirmed commissioner and explained his interest in serving.

Conklin and Richter provided commentary regarding the current status of the OPOC, its recent history and plans to move forward.

Conklin reported that the Selection Committee had recommended three final candidates for Ombudsman, including one who would require a work visa.

Richter asked Beggs about immigration issues, and Beggs explained process, timing and limitations on obtaining a work visa.

Audience Member Catherine Isabel encouraged the OPOC to better publicize its meetings in order to attract a larger audience at meetings.

Audience member Tim Connor asked the OPOC how it will direct the Ombudsman to consider the backlog of completed complaint investigations by Internal Affairs (IA) as well as the complaints that IA chose to classify as inquiries and not investigate. Conklin answered that

Commission would provide that direction to the new Ombudsman once s/he was hired. Beggs noted that current labor contract requires that IA investigations be completed within six months of the complaint, thus likely precluding the certification/continued investigation function of the Ombudsman for much of the backlog, but would not preclude an independent investigation outside the IA process. Richter noted that there is also a backlog of requests for Independent Investigations outside the IA process that needs to be addressed by the Commission and conducted by the Ombudsman once s/he is hired.

Audience member Elaine Tyrie asked how the ordinance could be improved to make it more effective and how the OPOC could get stronger support from the City Council? Conklin provided her opinion.

Conklin proposed that the OPOC schedule a special meeting to plan for the vetting/hiring process of the Ombudsman. Smith suggested a meeting for the commissioners to get to know each other better. Conklin explained that meetings of more than two commissioners needed to be public meetings under the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) but that the proposed working meeting would like result in more familiarity between the commissioners and suggested that new commissioners meet with other commissioners in pairs to get to know each other in order to comply with the OPMA.

Richter made motion to hold special a meeting on Tuesday, August 11, 2015, at 5:30pm at a location to be determined and VanderPol seconded. Motion passed.

OPOC discussed interview dates/times and format. Conklin suggested that OPOC interview candidates during the last two weeks of August depending on their availability and concurrently schedule meetings for candidates with community stakeholders.

Richter made motion to adopt the following substantive agenda items for the 8/11 meeting:

- 1) Set interview schedules and community group meetings;
- 2) Review candidate materials;
- 3) Appoint Chair and Vice-Chair;
- 4) Discuss process for developing OPOC policies and procedures;
- 5) Discuss process for developing OPOC work plan; and,
- 6) Discuss invitation to Open Government Ombudsperson for community training.

Connor provided commentary on behalf of Spokane Police Accountability Reform Coalition (SPARC):

- 1) That the Selection Committee process for selecting Ombudsman Candidate Finalists was not sufficiently transparent to the public and overly controlled by police unions;
- 2) That the OPOC should broadly open up the final selection process to the public and that SPARC will provide a list of community stakeholders that should be invited;
- 3) That all questioning of candidates in public meetings should occur in front of entire audience rather than at interview tables; and,
- 4) That each candidate should be specifically questioned on their willingness to undertake independent investigations as authorized under the City Charter.

Isabel asked why OPOC continued to exist if there was no Ombudsman and thus the OPOC had no ability to accomplish anything? Conklin responded that the OPOC still had the duty and power to hire an interim and permanent Ombudsman.

Audience Member Travis Schwartz suggested three questions for the Ombudsman Candidates:

- 1) How would a candidate describe their proposed relationship with the police, the city and the community;
- 2) How would they address the backlog of investigations that are uncertified; and,
- 3) How would they handle and prioritize independent investigations outside the IA process?

Tyrie commented that:

- 1) She appreciates the work of the OPOC to date;
- 2) The OPOC should focus on the candidates' willingness to provide independent oversight;
- 3) The interviewing and hiring process should be transparent; and,
- 4) Solving the backlog of uncertified IA investigations is important.

Richter commented that in the past there was a conflict between the understood role of the Ombudsman versus the OPOC that caused problems. He is now looking forward to the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm.

Submitted by Breean Beggs, approved by Commission on 8.11.15