



Chief Straub,

You have asked the Guild to provide its opinion on the City's effort to bring greater transparency to the Police Department, primarily through changes in OPO oversight. We appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this issue.

The Guild represents a dedicated group of police officers who are committed to protecting and serving the citizens of Spokane. We recognize the importance of actions taken to enhance community confidence in the Police Department and its police officers.

As you know, we have partnered with the City to bring greater transparency to the Police Department. Several years ago, the City proposed in bargaining a model of civilian police oversight, by creating an Ombudsman that would be allowed to actively participate in the investigation of police officers. Even though no other police jurisdiction in Washington had this level of civilian oversight, we agreed with the City. More recently, we entered into a Tentative Agreement with the City in which we concurred with the City's request to further expand the OPO's authority and independence by creating a Police Ombudsman Commission. As the old saying goes, actions speak louder than words, and we believe that through these actions we have demonstrated a willingness to work in a Police Department that is both transparent and committed to police professionalism.

When it comes to the investigation of alleged police misconduct, we are aligned with the City in wanting an investigation that is thorough and objective. This is the same standard used by the OPO to review and certify completed internal affairs investigations. We believe the Guild, the City, and the community have a shared interest in expecting and ensuring that all Department internal investigations meet this standard.

In summary, Chief, we support your efforts to further enhance the Department and its standing in the community. We understand the City Council is considering an amendment to the Civilian Oversight Ordinance. We have reviewed the proposed ordinance and we have some questions about some of the new concepts in the ordinance which were not discussed during negotiations, as well as how some of the changes will work in practice. However, as we have repeatedly demonstrated, we will sit down with the City. We are optimistic that these efforts will be successful, just as they have been in the past.

If you should have any questions, please let me know.

John Gately  
Spokane Police Guild President