

CITY OF SPOKANE USE OF FORCE COMMISSION

May 5, 2014

**Mayor David A. Condon
City of Spokane
Spokane City Hall
808 West Spokane Falls Boulevard
Spokane, Washington 99201**

Dear Mayor Condon:

On March 27, 2014, the City of Spokane Use of Force Commission received the one year update from yourself, Spokane Police Department (SPD) Chief of Police Frank Straub, and other city employees on the progress that has been made in implementing the twenty-six recommendations contained within the Commission's final report. Our comments on the one year presentation are organized under the four parts of our original report – Culture, SPD Policies and Practices, Civilian Oversight, and City Administration

Culture

Recommendations 3 (Rewrite the SPD Mission Statement) and 5 (Ensure corporate ownership of SPD Policy Manual) appear complete and the department is close to securing WASPC accreditation (Recommendation 4). Additionally, progress is being made in implementing Recommendation 6 (Explicitly link SPD Canons and Ethical Standards to hiring decisions and all force management actions). We would appreciate receiving an assessment, with specific examples, of the continued implementation of Recommendation 6 in the two year report.

We were pleased to hear from Chief Straub that the ongoing U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services review of the SPD will result in a departmental culture audit consistent with Recommendation 1. We look forward to reviewing the results of that audit in the two year report, if not sooner.

We were also pleased to hear you affirm the importance of making the City's negotiations with the Spokane Police Guild and other bargaining units more visible and understandable to the public in compliance with Recommendation 2 (Bring greater transparency to the City's negotiations with the Spokane Police Guild and the Spokane Police Lieutenants and Captains Association). We can't stress enough the importance

of making future negotiations with the Guild much more transparent than has been the case in the past in order to rebuild and maintain public trust.

SPD Policies and Practices

Recommendations 9 (Update and maintain certifications of the department's defensive tactic instructors) and 19 (Explore standardizing the weapons carried by officers in the line of duty) appear complete. Additionally, Chief Straub and his command staff are having success in creating, and taking advantage of existing, opportunities to connect with the public in ways that foster dialogue and build trust (Recommendation 7). Similarly, the department, with the support of city leadership, has taken affirmative steps to both increase staffing levels and to deploy officers in ways that improve public safety (Recommendation 10).

The SPD has embraced both crisis intervention training (Recommendation 12) and de-escalation training (Recommendation 13) on a department-wide basis. We look forward to learning how these new skill sets are improving policing in Spokane at the time of the two year report.

Recommendation 18 (Equip officers with body cameras) is well on its way to full implementation. Although there are important details to work out in regards to deploying the cameras, we anticipate many positive outcomes flowing from the use of this technology.

The SPD has been very active in implementing the remaining recommendations contained in the Policies and Procedures section of our final report. These recommendations called for significant changes and improvements in the SPD's use of force training program (Recommendations 8 & 11) and in its use of force reporting, investigation, and tracking operations (Recommendations 14-17). We would like to receive an assessment from the SPD on the effectiveness of these changes when the two year report is delivered.

Civilian Oversight

The Commission's Recommendations 20 through 22 called for the Office of Police Ombudsman to be granted greater independence, vested with new investigatory powers, and supported by a Citizen Advisory Board. In the interim between the Commission issuing its report in February 2013 and the one year report being delivered, the City entered into a new contract with the Spokane Police Guild, which was followed by a new City ordinance that expanded the powers and role of the Office of the Police Ombudsman and established a new citizen-staffed Police Ombudsman Commission. Most of the public comments received at the one year report public meeting were critical of this new ombudsman structure. The commentators generally argued that the reforms

did not go far enough in granting the Office of Police Ombudsman independent investigatory authority.

While the new City ordinance does not vest the Office of the Police Ombudsman with all of the independence and authority called for in our recommendations, we recognize the difficulty the City faced in securing the consent of the Spokane Police Guild to do more at this point in time. Nonetheless, the new ordinance does advance the cause of independent, vigorous citizen oversight. It is our hope that you and police department leadership will work with the reformed Office of the Police Ombudsman and new Public Ombudsman Commission to bring greater transparency to the SPD's work in order to rebuild trust and promote accountability between the department and the community.


City Administration

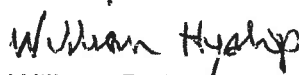
Recommendation 23 called upon the Mayor's Office to maintain an active and visible role in SPD oversight and administration, and in promoting the department to the community. The one year report contains a lot of activity on your part that is consistent with this recommendation. We would appreciate receiving your assessment of the effectiveness of this engagement on the operations of the SPD and the community's relationship to the department at the time of the two year report.


Recommendations 24 through 26 were directed at the City Attorney's Office and concerned that office establishing and maintaining appropriate separation of duties and taking an active role in the developing and updating the SPD's use of force policies and training materials. We are pleased to note that the City Attorney's Office has established protocols and practices that satisfy all three recommendations.


Thank you again for the opportunity to serve the City of Spokane and its citizens as members of the Use of Force Commission. We continue to be impressed with the progress that has been made in implementing our recommendations for improvement.

Sincerely,


Earl F. Martin
Chair


William D. Hyslop
Vice Chair


Gerry Alexander
Member


Ivan Bush
Member


Susan Hammond
Member