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POLICE OMBUDSMAN
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July 14, 2016

Chief Craig Meidl
Spokane Police Division
1100 W. Mallon Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99260

RE: R16-05 – Proper classification of complaints and chain of command findings

Dear Chief Meidl,

For record keeping purposes of the Office of the Police Ombudsman (“OPO”), I am formalizing previous recommendations made informally in 2016. In July 2016, we corresponded over email regarding classification of complaints received by Internal Affairs be made at the executive level instead of at the Internal Affairs level and the benefits for officers to view body camera footage for training purposes. Please find a summary of my recommendation below.

I found cases were disproportionately being classified as an “Inquiry” or “Administratively Suspended” during the certification process. I felt this did not bring finality to complaints since “suspended investigations may be reactivated.” See SPD Policy 1020. I interpret this to mean the complaint is left hanging over the officer when it should be closed. In one case specifically, the complainant refused to cooperate, all reasonable investigative leads were exhausted, and no evidence of wrong doing was uncovered. Body camera footage determined the complaint was false or lacked sufficient credibility to proceed. The complainant even withdrew the complaint after viewing the body camera footage of the incident.

Based on current policy, a chain of command review is required in order to make findings on the allegations. A suspended case would not be reviewed, nor would it have a final disposition. Further, the chain of command would be more actively involved in the complaint resolution process, bringing greater awareness of officer action and issues that matter to the community.

Thus, I recommend all completed investigations be reviewed and classified by the chain of command. Further, there is great value in utilizing department implemented body camera footage for an officer’s training. I recommend officers who are complained upon to review body camera footage of the incident with his or her supervisor for self-evaluation and training purposes.

Sincerely,

Bart Logue
Police Ombudsman
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