



SPOKANE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CRAIG N. MEIDL
CHIEF OF POLICE

Closed Case Summary

Complaint Number: C20-021 OPO Number: N/A
Date of Complaint: 3/18/2020
Allegation: Biased Policing, Demeanor and Policy Violation
Chain of Command Finding: Administratively Suspended
Final Discipline: Not Applicable

INCIDENT SYNOPSIS

Officers were dispatched to a collision. Officers contacted the drivers of both vehicles and determined it was likely a road rage situation wherein one driver “brake checked” the other vehicle, causing it to rear-end it. In the aftermath, the complainant discovered through a records request that officers believed he may be a vehicle thief and that he was lying. He believed they used their authority to punish him by issuing him a citation for Reckless Driving and treating him and his family like criminals. He also said they titled his collision report as auto theft and not an auto accident.

COMPLAINT

The allegations were Biased Policing, Demeanor, and Violation of Policy 340.3.5.E: Abuse of Authority.

INVESTIGATION

The Internal Affairs investigator reviewed the complaint, the collision report and citation, and the videos of the officers who were on scene. He also interviewed the complainant. The videos showed there was probable cause to support the charge given to the complainant and none of the candid remarks by the officers resulted in any mixed-motive investigations. After interviewing the complainant, one officer located skid marks in the center southbound lane that bolstered the other driver’s story and contradicted the complainant’s statement. In the video, the complainant himself admitted that he was applying his brakes in an effort to get the other driver to slow down. The complainant’s passengers were interviewed separately which is very routine and neither of them was pat frisked, searched or detained in a manner common with someone suspected of criminal activity. All three officers discussed the facts before them and concluded that the complainant’s actions arose to probable cause for Reckless Driving. They also concluded the other driver had some culpability and would be cited for Following Too Closely. There also appeared to be cause to cite the complainant for failure to provide vehicle registration, but one officer instead indicated he would just look it up on his computer.

Bodyworn camera video showed that the officer made judgmental remarks about the complainant. However, there was no evidence that these comments resulted in additional charges or actions against the complainant. The comments were not made within hearing range of the complainant and there was nothing unusual about how the collision investigation was handled. Video showed that officers conducted a proper investigation of the collision and verified that they had probable cause for Reckless Driving charges.

The Internal Affairs lieutenant determined that the case was a minor allegation that could be addressed by the employee's supervisor for informal follow-up. The Ombudsman concurred. The matter was resolved with mentoring and counseling.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The investigation was Administratively Suspended, and the officer's supervisor provided mentoring about the remarks.