

# Seattle Community Police Commission

Our city. Our safety. Our police. **Better together.**

True  
public  
safety  
can only  
happen  
when the  
community  
and police  
work  
together.

**Fall 2013**

## Connecting our communities and the Seattle Police Department

The 2010 shooting death by Seattle police of First Nations woodcarver John T. Williams, and a series of other serious incidents involving police and people of color, ignited public concern about excessive use of force and bias in the Seattle Police Department (SPD). After a federal investigation, the City of Seattle signed a settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to reform SPD practices. A memorandum of understanding details the work to be done and also mandated the establishment of the Seattle Community Police Commission (CPC) to provide community input on the SPD reform process and reform proposals. Policy changes will be made to ensure that police services in Seattle comply with the Constitution, and the laws of Washington and the United States. In addition to recommending changes in police practices, the CPC will also assess the need to improve the City's police accountability system and work to promote public confidence in SPD.

The CPC is reaching out broadly to the people of Seattle to discuss needed reforms. During October 2013, in meetings throughout the city with Seattle residents, the CPC wants to hear what it will take to improve trust and respect between the community and SPD, and to understand how SPD can improve its relations with community members. The CPC also wants to learn if policy recommendations under consideration make sense and if any changes should be made to them.

### **CPC members:**

Claudia D'Allegri  
Lisa Daugaard, *Co-Chair*  
Bill Hobson  
Jay Hollingsworth  
Kate Joncas  
Joseph Kessler  
Diane Narasaki, *Co-Chair*  
Tina Podlodowski  
Marcel Purnell  
Jennifer Shaw  
Kevin Stuckey  
Rev. Harriett Walden  
Rev. Aaron Williams

*(Currently there are  
two vacancies on the  
commission)*



### **Commissioners**

The CPC consists of 15 members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. Members represent the diversity of Seattle and include people from communities of color, ethnic and faith communities, immigrant communities, the urban Indian community, the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender community, civil rights advocates, the business community,

individuals familiar with the challenges faced by those with mental illness or substance abuse issues, and youth. One member is from the Seattle Police Officers Guild and one is from the Seattle Police Management Association. CPC members live or work in all five Seattle police precincts.

## Creating change that will endure

The police reform process now underway in Seattle offers a tremendous opportunity to make critically needed changes in police policies and practices and to build positive relationships between the police and the communities they serve.

### Core values for CPC's community engagement

- Partnership driven

*We all own the problem and the solution*

- Meaningful engagement

*CPC will be informed by community input*

- Inclusiveness

*Engage all stakeholders*

- Accountability and Transparency

*Proof that input matters*

### Community engagement

Successful police reform depends on widespread community input to proposed changes in SPD policies, and on how SPD can improve relations in the community.

Ongoing community engagement is of paramount importance. We are depending on community involvement over the long haul—community perspective is needed in the short-term on suggested changes, but we also need to know if changes SPD makes really work.

Community input and dialogue over time will also promote confidence in SPD, strengthen community-police relations, and support the Police Department in ensuring public safety for all.

The CPC is independent. Its purpose is to ensure public input to police reform. To fulfill its purpose, the CPC:

- Represents a broad range of community perspectives

- Researches and considers good policies and practices of other police departments
- Reviews and proposes changes to SPD policies, data collection, and training materials
- Actively engages diverse communities to discuss and comment on proposed reforms
- Incorporates community suggestions into its own policy recommendations
- Reports community feedback to key partners involved in the reform process

The CPC will also inform the community about the reform process, and about both its role and the role of the community in the reform process. Over time, the CPC will continue to engage the community and collect feedback on SPD's progress in complying with the settlement agreement.

### Current CPC policy work areas



## Policy recommendations

The Commission is committed to effective, fair policing.



### Bias-Free Policing

**The need for change:** Some people, particularly people of color, are disproportionately affected by law enforcement. Issues of unequal treatment involving stops, arrests and use of force are troubling. In some cases, this may be the result of intentional bias, but it also can be the result of unintentional bias in systems and institutions. Both types of bias may cause police to treat people differently, which may be counterproductive and unfair.

The 2011 SPD Community Survey reported that 63 percent of Seattle respondents believed racial profiling was a problem for the Department.

**CPC's task:** To recommend changes in policies, officer training and supervision, and in data collection, analysis and reporting to lessen the number of incidents involving both intended and unintended bias.

### Use of Force

**The need for change:** A pattern of using unnecessary or excessive force was a key finding of DOJ's investigation of SPD. DOJ found reason to believe that excessive force was disproportionately an issue in cases involving people of color, and that force too often was used when it was not warranted or to an unwarranted degree. DOJ also found reason to be concerned about force used against people with mental illness or under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The 2011 SPD Community Survey reported

that 72 percent of Seattle respondents believed there was a problem with SPD using excessive force.

**CPC's task:** To provide the community an opportunity to comment on proposed changes to SPD's use of force policy which is intended to ensure that only appropriate and necessary force is used for Constitutional and lawful purposes.

### Stops and Detentions

**The need for change:** One of the most important freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution is the ability to move freely and not be subjected to unwarranted searches and seizures. In order to ensure that there is strong support and confidence by the public in their police officers, it is critical that officers do their work without bias and within the parameters of the Constitution. The DOJ investigation concluded that SPD policies and training failed to clearly explain when an officer may legally stop, detain or search people short of arrest. DOJ found that, in some instances, these policies created the risk that SPD officers would make illegal stops and searches. The 2011 SPD Community Survey reported that 46 percent of Seattle respondents believed there was a problem with SPD stopping people without good reason.

**CPC's task:** To recommend changes in policies, officer training and supervision, and in data collection, analysis and reporting to make sure officers have valid cause to stop and detain.

### In-Car Video Recordings

**The need for change:** In-car video recordings have not always been reliably available to confirm or contradict written police reports or witness observations of controversial incidents. They also have not always been reliably available for training purposes. Recordings have not been reliably available due to a combination of department policies and technological limitations and challenges.

**CPC's task:** To recommend changes in technology, policies, officer training and supervision, and in data collection and reporting related to in-car video recordings to ensure recordings are consistently made and accessed. The availability of recordings for review will enhance public safety and officer accountability.

### Partners in reform

The CPC works closely with other agencies to promote reform, develop policy recommendations and ensure accountability. Key partners include SPD and other agencies and departments of the City of Seattle, the Court-appointed Monitor who oversees the settlement agreement, and the DOJ. The CPC works independently of its partners and will incorporate community perspectives in its final policy recommendations.

### Our success depends on the community

During October 2013, the CPC will seek public comments that will be used to refine and improve its final policy recommendations. The CPC needs your help to create a stronger, safer and more connected community.

How to participate:

Sign up for our email listserv at **OCPC@seattle.gov**.

Go online to our website at **www.seattle.gov/policecommission**:

- Find information about CPC meetings which are open to the public and review meeting minutes.
- Review materials about proposed policy changes.
- Complete our online questionnaire about how to improve SPD practices and community relations.
- Comment or provide suggestions for topics or issues that the CPC should look into (or mail comments and suggestions to PO Box 94749, Seattle, WA 98124-4749).

Contact us to ask CPC representatives to meet with your group, or to offer ideas for how we can better reach community members (call 206-233-2664 or email [OCPC@seattle.gov](mailto:OCPC@seattle.gov)).



**Learn more:**  
[www.seattle.gov/policecommission](http://www.seattle.gov/policecommission)

**Contact us:**  
**Seattle Community Police Commission**  
[OCPC@seattle.gov](mailto:OCPC@seattle.gov)  
**206-233-2664**

### Next steps

The CPC will refer draft policy recommendations to the community and key partners for feedback during October 2013. Final CPC recommendations will take into consideration that feedback. A formal CPC report is due in mid-November, and in December the CPC will present its report to the Mayor, City Council, and to the community.