The Need for Reform

In 2010, there were a number of highly publicized use of force incidents on residents, many of them people of color. Dozens of community organizations wrote a letter to the US Department of Justice (DOJ) requesting a formal investigation, which was conducted in 2011. The DOJ reported that the Seattle Police Department (SPD) was engaging in unconstitutional policing and needed to reform three main areas:

- **Excessive Use of Force**: 20% of all uses of force were unnecessary. Officers also escalated minor situations.
- **Biased Policing**: Potential biases in stopping people of color for questioning and disproportionate uses of force against them, all eroding community trust.
- **Lack of Supervision & Accountability**: SPD and others did not properly monitor or investigate uses of force.

The DOJ's findings led to the City entering into a Settlement Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding with DOJ, also known as the Consent Decree. That Consent Decree has guided police reform for the past four years and counting. While much progress has been made, three critical independent institutions are needed to ensure that the fundamental principles of reforms are lasting and truly meaningful.

Creating Lasting & Meaningful Change

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**Independent Institutions**

1. **Community Police Commission**
   - This Community Police Commission (CPC) has developed reform recommendations and advocates for community interests and perspectives. Making the CPC permanent and giving it a meaningful role in police reform will ensure that the community’s voice will not only be heard but will always influence police reform.

2. **Office of the Inspector General**
   - The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) would be an independent auditor and monitor of the police department to provide systemic oversight of every SPD function with a priority on systems impacting civil rights. Councilmember González is leading the effort to create this new and independent office.

3. **Office of Professional Accountability**
   - A civilian-led Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) investigates individual complaints about the police. Its independence will be strengthened by having additional civilian staff including investigators and complaint navigators.

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**Principles Become Independent Institutions**

- **Community Voice at the Table**: The community needs a strong, active role in police oversight to foster lasting trust.
- **Independent Review of Systemic Issues**: Meaningful police oversight and reform needs to be independent, sufficiently funded and ongoing.
- **Meaningful Officer Accountability**: Fair, effective and efficient investigations of officer misconduct are one of the cornerstones needed to build public trust.

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COUNCILMEMBER M. LORENA GONZÁLEZ
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Who Is Involved in Reform

People and local organizations have been and will continue to be the backbone of reform. The Community Police Commission is a conduit of this voice, and the legislative process, led by Councilmember González as chair of the Safe Communities committee, will continue to engage community in public hearings.

The DOJ conducted the initial investigation and the Court oversees implementation of the Consent Decree. The Court will determine if the City’s police reform legislation complies with the purpose and intent of the Consent Decree.

The Mayor’s Office, the City Attorney, and Council have engaged with the Community Police Commission and Federal Court to develop accountability recommendations.

Timeline: Police Reform in Seattle

In October 2016, the Community and the Mayor’s Office submitted draft legislation to the Federal Court, which gave its preliminary approval. Now the legislation will come to the City Council for public discussion and finalization in the Gender Equity, Safe Communities, and New Americans Committee chaired by Councilmember M. Lorena González.

2009 - 2010 & Prior
A number of highly-publicized use of force cases came to light.

March 2011
DOJ launches investigation into SPD.

August 2012
The Consent Decree goes into effect, kicking off the court-monitored reform process.

April 2014 - July 2015
The CPC and Mayor’s Office make recommendations for reform but are told to go back to the drawing board by the federal court overseeing the process.

December 2010
34 community organizations implore the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to conduct a formal investigation of SPD.

December 2011
DOJ announces its findings: SPD is unconstitutionally using unnecessary and/or excessive force as well as potentially employing other bad practices like biased policing within poor accountability systems.

March 2013
The Community Police Commission (CPC) is created, developing reform recommendations and representing community interests and perspectives.

October 2016 - January 2017
The Mayor’s Office and CPC make another set of recommendations that are submitted to the federal court. They receive preliminary approval, paving the way for creating legislation.

Early 2017
The Mayor’s Office submits proposed police accountability legislation to Council.

Early - Mid 2017
Councilmember González leads study missions to three other cities with an Inspector General (IG) to explore best practices related to an IG and reform in general.

Early - Mid 2017
Councilmember González, chair of the Safe Communities Committee, leads the process of shaping and finalizing police accountability legislation that will define the powers and establish the independence of the three main accountability entities: CPC, OIG, and OPA.

Early - Mid 2017
The public provides input at the Safe Communities Committee, including two special evening community meetings.