March 30, 2020

Chief Carmen Best
Seattle Police Department
PO Box 34986
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Chief Best:

Please see the below Management Action Recommendation.

Case Number
- 2018OPA-0742 / 2020COMP-0003

Topic
- Handling Money Evidence

Summary
- OPA received a complaint regarding a large discrepancy in the amount of seized currency reported by officers and the actual amount of currency packaged in the envelope as evidence.

Analysis
- Officers seized a large quantity of currency in an undercover operation. They conducted an initial count of the currency at the scene. It was then transported to the Evidence Unit, where the officers used a money counter and noted an increase over the previous count of the currency. Prior to this operation, the involved employees were ordered to deactivate body-worn video (BWV) to protect the identity of undercover officers. Thus, the counting of the currency was not recorded on BWV.
- The bank later notified SPD that one of the currency envelopes was short several thousand dollars from the amount listed. Security video from the SPD Evidence Unit lobby does not show any of the officers appearing to take any of the currency.
- *SPD Policy 7.080* concerns entering money into evidence. It does not require officers to record the counting of currency on BWV.

Recommendation(s)
- Create a policy governing the collection, transporting, and counting of large quantities of seized currency. The policy should state that BWV should be used to record the counting of currency. In cases where BWV recording of the incident is not possible, the policy should instruct officers to reactivate BWV while handling money and other evidence.
- Units should consider additional steps to ensure the integrity of the money evidence and that an accurate count is completed. Such procedures should be uniform across all units that handle such evidence.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

AM

Andrew Myerberg
Director, Office of Police Accountability