



November 14, 2017

Seattle City Council
Via Email

Re: Adding Civilian Police Accountability Experts to the Labor Relations Policy Committee

Dear Councilmembers,

The Community Police Commission (CPC) appreciates the efforts to arrive at a contract with the Seattle Police Management Association (SPMA) that accepts certain police oversight reforms adopted by the Council in May. However, we must also note that there are areas where the SPMA contract is either unclear or departs from the previously adopted police accountability ordinance. To avoid these problems in still-pending and future contracts, the CPC requests that Council include representatives from the Community and civilian oversight bodies on the Labor Relations Policy Committee (LRPC).

The overall alignment in contract priorities demonstrates the willingness of SPMA to work with the City and should serve as an example to the Seattle Police Officers' Guild as it negotiates its contract. We are particularly pleased with the provision transferring all supervisory positions in the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) from sworn officers to civilians, which is an important step to increasing OPA accessibility and community trust. We also see SPMA's agreement to withdraw its Unfair Labor Practice complaint now pending before the Public Employment Relations Commission as essential, as it resolves uncertainty about the status of changes made over the past several years in the name of police reform while implementing the Consent Decree.

That said, there are areas in which it is unclear whether the contract is inconsistent with the police accountability legislation. This lack of clarity makes uncertain the rules of the road under the new contract. We understand that a fair negotiation process involves compromise. However, it is our role to shed light on the areas in which the contract does not achieve the important reforms previously agreed to by the City and the Community.

One such area is the disciplinary appeals process. There have previously been multiple routes of appeal after the Chief imposes discipline, meaning the union could avoid one appeal process, which was not only open to the public, but less likely to reverse discipline. This was changed in the ordinance, which established a single route of appeal through a reformed Public Safety Civil Service Commission that promised greater expertise, impartiality, and transparency. Unfortunately, this provision is not part of the SPMA contract.


The contract language may contradict another ordinance provision to permit the OPA Director to consult with criminal investigators in some of the most serious cases of alleged police misconduct. This was intended to ensure that the administrative investigation under OPA and the criminal investigation that might lead to criminal charges against officers did not compromise one another.

This underscores the importance of Council immediately adding the OPA Director, Inspector General, and CPC representatives to the LRPC to advise on the police accountability impacts of these contracts. In future

negotiations, technical advisors with accountability expertise at the table should ensure consistency with accountability priorities and values, as well as help avoid confusion about what is meant by the contract language.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rev. Harriett Walden, Co-Chair
Community Police Commission
Commission



Enrique Gonzalez, Co-Chair
Community Police Commission



Isaac Ruiz, Co-Chair
Community Police

Cc:
Seattle Community Police Commission