Issued Date: May 21, 2026

From: Deputy Director Nelson R. Leese (on behalf of Director Bonnie J. Glenn)
Office of Police Accountability

Case Number:2025OPA-0369

<u>Allegations of Misconduct & Director's Findings</u>

Named Employee #1

1. **Allegation #1: 5.001 - Standards and Duties 5.001-POL 11. Employees Will Be Truthful and Complete in All Communication**
   Finding: Sustained
2. **Allegation #2: 5.001 - Standards and Duties POL-2. Employees Must Adhere to Laws, City Policy, and Department Policy**
   Finding: Sustained
3. **Allegation #3: 5.001 - Standards and Duties POL-10. Employees Will Strive to be Professional**
   Finding: Sustained

   - **Imposed Discipline: Termination**

This Closed Case Summary (CCS) represents the opinion of the OPA Director regarding the misconduct alleged and therefore sections may be written in the first person.

Executive Summary:

Named Employee #1 (NE#1), a public disclosure officer (PDO), processed public disclosure requests (PDRs) in SPD's Legal Unit. The Complainant, a Legal Unit manager, alleged that NE#1 was dishonest with requestors regarding the statuses of their PDRs. The Complainant also alleged that NE#1 was noncompliant with office policy and the Public Records Act (PRA) by failing to preserve 911 audio records, repeatedly extending PDRs without providing any records, failing to prevent overdue installments, and failing to maintain PDR worksheets.

Administrative Note:

On February 6, 2026, the Office of Inspector General certified OPA's investigation as thorough, timely, and objective.

Summary of the Investigation:

OPA investigated the complaint by reviewing PDR records, GovQA (a public records portal) records, and Legal Unit policies. OPA also interviewed the Complainant and NE#1.

A. OPA Complaint – Initial Submission

On September 26, 2025, the Complainant submitted an OPA complaint, describing the following.

On September 10, 2025, the Complainant and NE#1 met to discuss performance issues. Specifically, NE#1 expressed frustration about having the highest number of PDRs in the Legal Unit. Therefore, the Complainant reassigned 103 of NE#1's 582 PDRs to two PDOs. A PDO identified issues with one PDR (PDR#1) originally assigned to NE#1 and then notified a supervisor.

Public Disclosure Request #1
The Complainant investigated PDR#1 by reviewing NE#1's PDR worksheet, video redaction spreadsheet, internal folders, and GovQA records. According to the Complainant, NE#1 sent six messages to the requestor between December 2, 2024, and August 4, 2025. Each message served to extend PDR#1 because NE#1 indicated that she was awaiting body-worn video (BWV) redactions. Upon reviewing the above-mentioned records, the Complainant found no evidence of NE#1 submitting any request to the video specialists for BWV redactions, reviewing BWV, or working on PDR#1 since June 5, 2024. The Complainant provided OPA with these records to support her findings.

OPA reviewed these records and found that they corroborated the Complainant's account.

Public Disclosure Request #2
The Complainant identified similar issues in another PDR (PDR#2) and investigated it by reviewing the above-mentioned records. According to the Complainant, NE#1 sent six messages to the requestor between September 18, 2024, and July 28, 2025. Each message served to extend PDR#2 because NE#1 indicated that she was awaiting BWV redactions. Upon reviewing the above-mentioned records, the Complainant found no evidence of NE#1 submitting any request to the video specialists for BWV redactions, and the amount of work NE#1 completed on PDR#2 was unknown due to NE#1's PDR worksheet being "completely blank." The Complainant provided OPA with these records to support her findings.

OPA reviewed these records and found that they corroborated the Complainant's account.

The Complainant alleged that NE#1 was dishonest with the requestors in PDR#1 and PDR#2. The Complainant determined that NE#1 did not review BWV for redactions or submit any request to the video specialists for BWV redactions.

B. OPA Complaint – Supplement

On September 29, 2025, the Complainant supplemented her OPA complaint after conducting a more extensive review of NE#1's work, describing the following.

Dishonesty
The Complainant identified 26 PDRs involving dishonesty. Like PDR#1 and PDR#2, the Complainant believed that NE#1 provided false information to the requestors about the statuses of their records. Most of the false information concerned delays in BWV redactions from the video specialists, despite NE#1 having not submitted any requests. The Complainant provided OPA with records to support her findings, including PDR worksheets, audit histories, and GovQA records.

OPA reviewed records associated with all 26 PDRs and found that they corroborated the Complainant's account. Specifically, NE#1 informed the requestors that either she was awaiting BWV redactions from the video specialists despite not having submitted any requests or she was experiencing delays due to her reviewing videos.

Failure to Preserve Records
The Complainant identified 22 PDRs involving failures to preserve records. Here, the Complainant believed that NE#1 failed to preserve 911 audio records before they were automatically deleted after 90 days. The Complainant provided OPA with records to support her findings, including PDR worksheets, audit histories, and GovQA records.

OPA reviewed records associated with all 22 PDRs and found that they corroborated the Complainant's account. Specifically, NE#1 failed to preserve 911 audio records during the 90-day retention period. In two reassigned PDRs, the Complainant and another supervisor intervened right before the retention period expired by preserving 911 audio records.

Failure to Provide Records
The Complainant identified 12 PDRs involving failures to provide records. Here, the Complainant believed that NE#1 repeatedly extended these PDRs without providing any records. The Complainant provided OPA with records to support her findings, including PDR worksheets, audit histories, and GovQA records.

OPA reviewed records associated with all 12 PDRs and found that they corroborated the Complainant's account. Specifically, NE#1 made consecutive extensions in each PDR without providing an installment of records.

C. OPA Interviews

Complainant
On January 14, 2026, OPA interviewed the Complainant. She said she had been meeting with NE#1 over the past year to address her work performance. She said she shadowed NE#1, offered suggestions, and created a schedule for NE#1 to follow, but these measures were ineffective. She said NE#1 "appeared to be trying to obfuscate the things that she knows we check to ensure compliance so that she wouldn't get in trouble." She said she ordered an audit of NE#1's caseload and found about 60 PDRs with serious issues, leading to NE#1 being placed on administrative leave. She acknowledged that NE#1 was experiencing personal challenges outside of work.

The Complainant said video redaction requests are routed and recorded in GovQA. She said NE#1 falsely informed requestors that their requests were delayed due to videos being sent for redaction when, in fact, NE#1 had not submitted any such request. She said NE#1 would not necessarily have been dishonest if NE#1 informed the requestors that their requests were delayed due to NE#1 reviewing the videos. However, the Complainant did not believe NE#1 was, in fact, reviewing the videos. She said supervisors are notified of any delays from the video specialists, and these delays are recorded in GovQA.

The Complainant said a PDR extension based on the need for additional time is permissible under the PRA, although it requires a specific reason. She said an extension should be tailored to each PDR and specify what was being worked on to the requestor. She said NE#1 had several “red dots,” which indicated overdue installments in a PDR. She said having no red dots is a citywide policy intended to comply with the PRA. She said there was no case law indicating that an overdue installment violated the PRA, but that SPD’s Legal Unit treated them as violations institutionally. She said the number of extensions was not the issue. Rather, she said the issues involved NE#1 repeatedly extending PDRs without providing any records and NE#1 extending due dates by mere days or weeks, leading to a “snowballing” effect of deadlines. She said NE#1 could have complied with the PRA by extending the next deadline to several months or dividing the installments into smaller portions.

The Complainant said a PDO must document 911 audio record requests in GovQA. However, she said NE#1 failed to request the 911 audio records. She said PDR worksheets were required in the Legal Unit and must be living documents reflecting current information. She said NE#1 did not maintain PDR worksheets, and her worksheets lacked substantive information.

<u>Named Employee #1</u>
On January 20, 2026, OPA interviewed NE#1. She said she had been with SPD for 26 years and spent four or five years in its Legal Unit. She said she was struggling due to having the largest caseload and receiving minimal support. She said that even though about 100 PDRs were reassigned, she was still unable to manage her caseload.

OPA presented the PDR and GovQA records to NE#1. She said she struggled remembering many PDRs. When OPA asked why NE#1 informed the requestors that she submitted videos for redactions despite the absence of such submissions, she replied that she “messed up” or made a mistake. She said her overwhelming caseload caused her to forget. She denied being intentionally dishonest with the requestors.

NE#1 said the Complainant encouraged her to extend her PDRs. When OPA asked whether NE#1 extended PDRs several months out to manage her workload or whether NE#1 provided smaller installments of records, she replied that she “didn’t work that way.” She said she did not recall receiving guidance indicating that multiple extensions could be problematic. However, she acknowledged her mistake in making repeated extensions in a PDR that OPA presented to her. She admitted to occasionally having red dots and recognized that policy did not permit them, but she attributed her red dots to her overwhelming workload. She also admitted that her communications about extensions might have been incomplete, but she insisted that they were not dishonest.

NE#1 denied awareness of the 90-day retention period for 911 audio records. She said she typically requests activities after being assigned a PDR. However, she attributed her failure to retain 911 audio records to mistakenly believing that she had already retained them. She said any destruction of 911 audio records was unintentional. She said she tracked her work using paper checklists. She said she did not usually use the PDR worksheets, although she was currently being trained on them.

NE#1 denied any wrongdoing and insisted that her work ethics were based on her training. She said she had never seen SPD's professionalism policy.

OPA notes that NE#1's union representative informed OPA that NE#1 had experienced a deeply personal hardship less than a week before this interview. OPA offered to reschedule the interview, but NE#1 declined and expressed a desire to continue with her OPA interview.

Analysis and Conclusions:

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #1
5.001 – Standards and Duties, 5.001-POL-11. Employees Will Be Truthful and Complete in All Communication

The Complainant alleged that NE#1 was dishonest with requestors regarding the statuses of their PDRs.

Department employees must be truthful and complete in all communications. SPD Policy 5.001-POL-11.

This allegation is sustained. NE#1 was repeatedly dishonest with the requestors in PDR#1 and PDR#2 by falsely claiming that she was awaiting video redactions from the video specialists despite not having submitted any requests to them. The fact that NE#1 sent six messages to both requestors indicated that her statements were either intentionally dishonest or reckless indifference to the truth, rather than simply mistaken. NE#1's failure to be truthful and complete in either PDR#1 or PDR#2 would have been sufficient to sustain this allegation. However, the Complainant also identified 26 additional PDRs that also pointed to a consistent pattern of dishonesty. In these PDRs, NE#1 repeatedly provided incorrect information to the requestors about the statuses of their records—most of which concerned false claims about delays in video redactions from the video specialists despite not having submitted any requests to them. There was also evidence suggesting that NE#1 misled the requestors by claiming that she was experiencing delays due to her reviewing videos. The Complainant and OPA found no documentation in PDR worksheets, audit histories, or GovQA records to support NE#1's claims. NE#1 was unable to provide any records to OPA that would support her claims. Overall, the evidence overwhelmingly showed NE#1's was neither truthful nor complete when communicating with the requestors.

Accordingly, OPA recommends that this allegation be Sustained.

Recommended Finding: **Sustained**

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #2

5.001 – Standards and Duties, 5.001-POL-2. Employees Must Adhere to Laws, City Policy, and Department Policy

The Complainant alleged that NE#1 was noncompliant with office policy and the PRA by failing to preserve 911 audio records, repeatedly extending PDRs without providing any records, failing to prevent overdue installments, and failing to maintain PDR worksheets.

Employees must adhere to laws, city policy, and department policy. SPD Policy 5.001-POL-2.

This allegation is sustained based on multiple violations of Legal Unit policies and the PRA, as described below.

Under the PRA, "[i]f a public record request is made at a time when such record exists but is scheduled for destruction in the near future, the agency … shall retain possession of the record, and may not destroy or erase the record until the request is resolved." RCW 42.56.100. NE#1 failed to preserve 911 audio records in 22 PDRs during their 90-day retention period. The Complainant and another supervisor managed to intervene in two PDRs before the retention period expired. NE#1's claimed unawareness of this 90-day retention period was not acceptable, given her duties as a PDO. NE#1's mistaken belief that she thought she had already retained 911 audio records did not mitigate the PRA violations and, instead, appears consistent with a reckless indifference to accuracy in conducting her work.

Under the PRA, "[a]dditional time required to respond to a request may be based upon the need to clarify the intent of the request, <u>to locate and assemble the information requested</u>, to notify third persons or agencies affected by the request, or to determine whether any of the information requested is exempt and that a denial should be made as to all or part of the request." RCW 42.56.520(2) (emphasis added). Moreover, when a person believes an agency has not made a reasonable estimate of the time required to respond to a PDR, the "burden of proof shall be on the agency to show that the estimate it provided is reasonable." *See* RCW 42.56.550(2). Relatedly, a Legal Unit policy states, "<u>**NO RED DOTS/PAST DUE PDRS**</u>." (emphasis in original). It also specifies, "Extension messages show the requestors that SPD is engaged in their request and indicate attention and progress."

NE#1 made consecutive extensions in 12 PDRs without providing an installment of records. Although NE#1 could have extended the deadlines to several months or divided installments into smaller portions, she claimed that she "didn't work that way." NE#1 also incurred several red dots indicating overdue installments. These extensions and overdue installments violated the PRA and office policy because there was no evidence that NE#1 attempted "to locate and assemble the information requested," *see* RCW 42.56.520(2), or was "engaged in their request [to] indicate attention and progress." The PDR worksheets, audit histories, and GovQA records did not reflect any evidence of NE#1 working on her assigned PDRs. Rather, NE#1 appeared to have consistently extended her deadlines to mere days or weeks to avoid the red dots—an easily trackable metric of PDO performance. Although NE#1's extensions were not necessarily unreasonable due to her workload, they became unreasonable when she showed no progress on her assigned PDRs, failed to articulate specific reasons for the extensions, or failed to specify what she was working on to the requestor. Based on this record, NE#1 would not be able to "show that the estimate [she] provided is reasonable" under the PRA. *See* RCW 42.56.550(2). Overall, the evidence overwhelmingly showed NE#1's unreasonable extensions or overdue installments that violated the PRA and office policy.

A Legal Unit policy specifies, "Checklists are required to be **living documents** inside of the **Working Docs folders**." NE#1 failed to maintain PDR worksheets, resulting in her worksheets being either blank or lacking substantive information. NE#1 admitted to not using PDR worksheets, claiming instead that she tracked her work using paper checklists. NE#1's failure to use and maintain PDR worksheets violated office policy and likely contributed to her failure to preserve records and accurately communicate with requestors.

Accordingly, OPA recommends that this allegation be Sustained.

Recommended Finding: **Sustained**

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #3
5.001 – Standards and Duties, 5.001-POL-10. Employees Will Strive to be Professional

NE#1 allegedly undermined public trust in SPD and herself.

SPD employees must "strive to be professional." SPD Policy 5.001-POL-10. Further, "employees may not engage in behavior that undermines public trust in the Department, the officer, or other officers," whether on or off duty. *Id*.

This allegation is sustained for the reasons articulated above. The PRA is a broad mandate, granting citizens the legal right to inspect public records from a city agency like SPD. In her role as a PDO, NE#1 was tasked with furthering that objective by providing public records to those who requested them. It cannot be overlooked—and OPA is extremely sympathetic to the fact—that NE#1 was experiencing a significant personal hardship during this time and carried a high workload. OPA acknowledges that these challenges likely impacted her performance and decision making. Nevertheless, NE#1 undermined public trust in SPD and herself by providing false information to those requestors, failing to preserve 911 audio records, repeatedly and unreasonably extending PDRs, failing to provide timely installment of records, and failing to work on her PDRs.

Accordingly, OPA recommends that this allegation be Sustained.

Recommended Finding: **Sustained**

Footnote 1. The OPA Director may designate a civilian OPA Deputy Director to "perform such duties and have such powers as the OPA Director may prescribe and delegate." Seattle Ordinance 125315, Council Bill 118969, subchapter I, section 3.29.100(B).