

# Seattle Community Police Commission

**Joel Merkel**  
CPC Co-Chair

**Cali Ellis, PhD**  
CPC Executive Director

**February 27, 2024**  
Seattle City Council  
Public Safety Committee

**Seattle  
Community  
Police Commission**



# CPC and the History of Accountability

CPC Established by 2012 Consent Decree

First piece of the current Accountability System, establishing OIG and reviewing OPA

Originally comprised of 15 members of the community

Made permanent and independent by 2017 Police Accountability Ordinance

- City Ordinance 125315, signed into law on June 1, 2017

Accountability Ordinance updated in July 2023



# Seattle Community Police Commission

Section  
3.29.01

2017 Police  
Accountability  
Ordinance

## **CPC's Mission:**

*"to help ensure public confidence in the ... responsiveness of the police accountability system to public concerns by engaging the community to develop recommendations on the police accountability system and provide a community-based perspective on law enforcement related policies, practices, and services affecting public trust; all for the purpose of ensuring constitutional, accountable, effective, and respectful policing."*



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# Seattle Community Police Commission



## Structure



## 15 Commissioners

Three appointing  
authorities: Mayor,  
City Council, CPC  
Each appointee must  
be confirmed by City  
Council  
Three year terms



## Staff

Seattle  
Community  
Police Commission

Executive Director  
Policy  
Community  
Engagement  
Communications

# Commissioners



6 new Commissioners in 2023, including representatives for **public defense, civil liberties, and SPMA**



In-person New Commissioner orientation with presentations from OIG, OPA, CAO, SPD



Adrien Leavitt  
CPC Commissioner  
Nominee

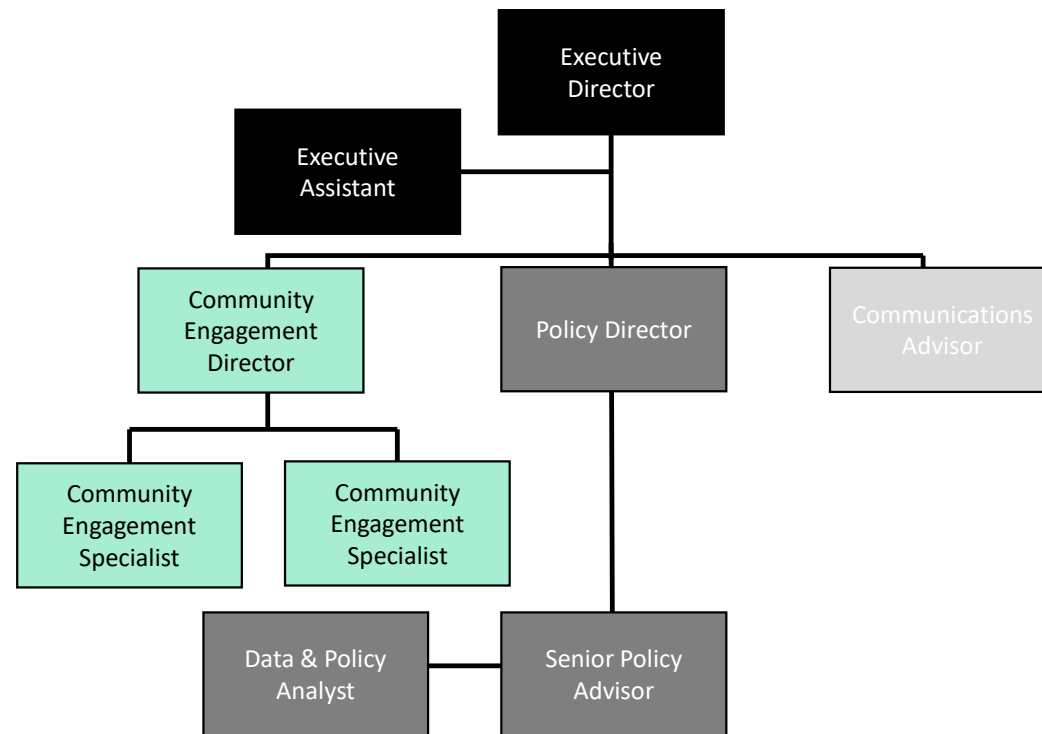
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# CPC is the Smallest of the Oversight Partners

**CPC:** 9 FTE (10 in 2024)

**OPA:** Approx. 28

**OIG:** Approx. 21



# CPC Authority and Responsibility

Monitor	Monitor the implementation by SPD, OPA, City elected officials, and other City departments and offices of recommendations made by the Inspector General, the OPA Director, and CPC.
Review	Review closed OPA investigations to identify opportunities for systemic improvements.
Collaborate	Collaborate with SPD, OPA, and the City Attorney's Office in improving system transparency.
Input	Review and provide input into SPD recruiting, hiring, and promotional practices.



# Collaboration with OIG, OPA, and SPD

Ongoing Quarterly Partners  
Meetings

OPA Director presentation to CPC  
Meetings

CPC-OPA and CPC-OIG Staff  
Lunches

Standing staff meetings CPC-OIG  
and CPC-OPA

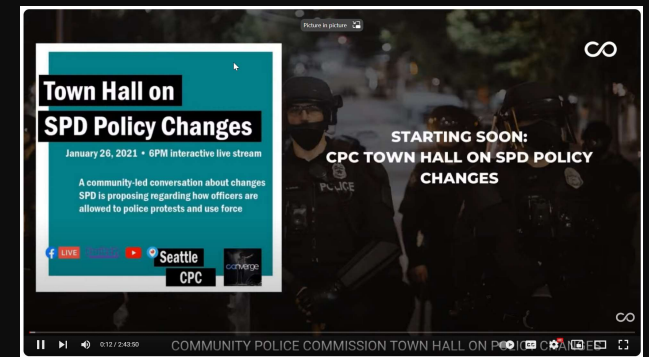
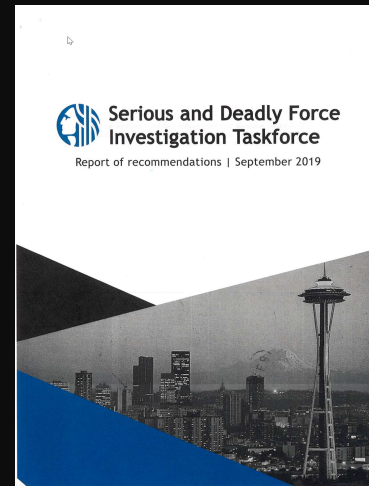
CPC collaborates in providing  
feedback for policy in OPA and SPD



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# CPC Accomplishments Since 2017

- Police Accountability Ordinance revisions to strengthen CPC as part of the oversight system (2023)
- Direct community input into Use of Force policies (2021)
- Serious and Deadly Taskforce Recommendations (2019)



# CPC Priorities for 2024

## Organizational

Increase responsiveness to community policing concerns through facilitated community engagement meetings with data and feedback collected and measured

Implement a comprehensive organizational restructuring plan, including updated processes and protocols, to increase time allocated to core statutory duties.

Comprehensive review of operations and procedures, benchmarking against recognized best practices in civilian oversight, and implement evidence-based initiatives aimed at increasing transparency, accountability, and community engagement

## Systemic

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Enhance public trust and confidence in police services through demonstrated commitment to the Police Accountability Ordinance

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Promote transparency and information sharing with the public about police contracts

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Strengthen community voice in direct input to SPD policy



## News

### CPC Co-Chairs' Statements and Media Appearances

September 27, 2023 | [Seattle Times: Decision to halt program analyzing Seattle police bodycam video under scrutiny](#) [↗](#)

September 21, 2023 | [Seattle police chief asked to suspend officer for offensive comments - MyNorthwest.com](#) [↗](#)

September 21, 2023 | [VIDEO: KOMO: Seattle Community Police Commission urges unpaid leave for officer caught allegedly mocking woman's death](#) [↗](#)

September 21, 2023 | [VIDEO: KING5: Community Police Commission calls for action after Seattle police bodycam video](#) [↗](#)

September 21, 2023 | [VIDEO: KIRO: Seattle Community Police Commission calls for suspension of officer caught mocking woman's death](#) [↗](#)

September 21, 2023 | [VIDEO: FOX13: SPD oversight group demands officer under investigation for viral bodycam comments be put on leave](#) [↗](#)

## CPC Amplifies Voice of Community



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# Accountability and Community

- Police work requires accountability for trust
- Loss of community faith in policing affects trust and the effectiveness of SPD
- Staffing and rebuilding require community support
- Holding officers accountable improves community relationships with SPD





## Community Engagement and Building Trust

### Key Partnerships

- African-American, East-African, LGBTQ, Filipino and SPD Precinct Advisory Councils
- East African Senior Lunch Program
- City of Seattle – OPA, OIG, SPD, Office of Civil Rights, Department of Neighborhoods, Seattle Youth Employment Program, City Auditor

# Responsive to Community Needs and Concerns

**D. CPC shall be responsive to community needs and concerns through means including, but not limited to, the following:**

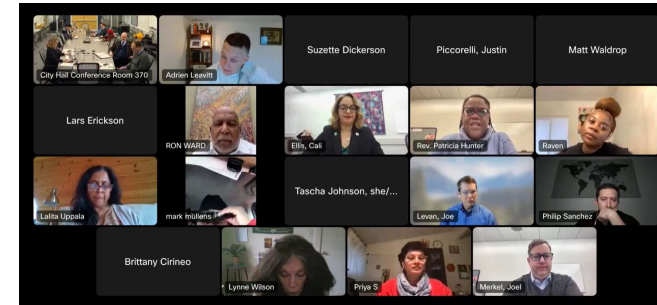
- Engaging in community outreach to obtain the perspectives of community members and SPD employees on police-community relations, SPD policies and practices, the police accountability system, and other matters.
- Maintaining connections with representatives of disenfranchised communities and with other community groups in all of the City's legislative districts, as well as with SPD demographic and precinct advisory councils.
- Providing SPD, OPA and OIG with community feedback relevant to their operations received as a result of its public outreach activities.



# Community Input to SPD Policies

## 3.29.300 Community Police Commission established – Functions and authority

- C. CPC shall review and provide input to OPA, OIG, SPD, and other City departments and offices, including the Mayor, Council, and City Attorney on the police accountability system, police services, and SPD policies and practices of significance to the public...



### Seattle Police Department Manual

#### **13.030 – Emergency Vehicle Operations**

Effective Date: 03/01/2018

##### **13.030-POL**

##### **1. Defining Emergency Response**

**Emergency Response** – When an officer operates an authorized police vehicle in a manner that is substantially outside of a normal traffic pattern.

##### **2. Officers May Drive in an Emergency Response Only When the Need Outweighs the Risk**

The preservation of life is the highest priority. Criminal apprehension and the preservation of property are secondary.

Misdemeanor or property crimes do not justify an emergency response unless:

- Responding to an in-progress crime, or
- Where there is a legitimate concern for the preservation of life.

##### **3. Officers Shall Modify Their Emergency Response When Appropriate**

Emergency driving shall be modified or terminated:

- As ordered by a supervisor;
- Or
- When the totality of the circumstances indicates the risk of continuing the emergency driving outweighs the need.

The officer's decision shall be reviewed based on the information available to them at the time.

# Including Accountability in Police Contracts

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Critical to ensuring a  
policing system with  
community confidence

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Accountability Ordinance  
Adopted in 2017

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State law allows  
accountability provisions  
to be bargained

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City found out of  
compliance with Consent  
Decree in 2019 in part  
due to CBA





## 2023: Consent Decree Winding Down

- Granted in part and denied in part the motion to approve the compliance agreement
- Ongoing assessments to evaluate sustained compliance, including accountability provisions
- Analysis for Court review of SPOG CBA Tentative Agreement for effect, if any on accountability systems due within 30 days of proposal



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## The Court's View

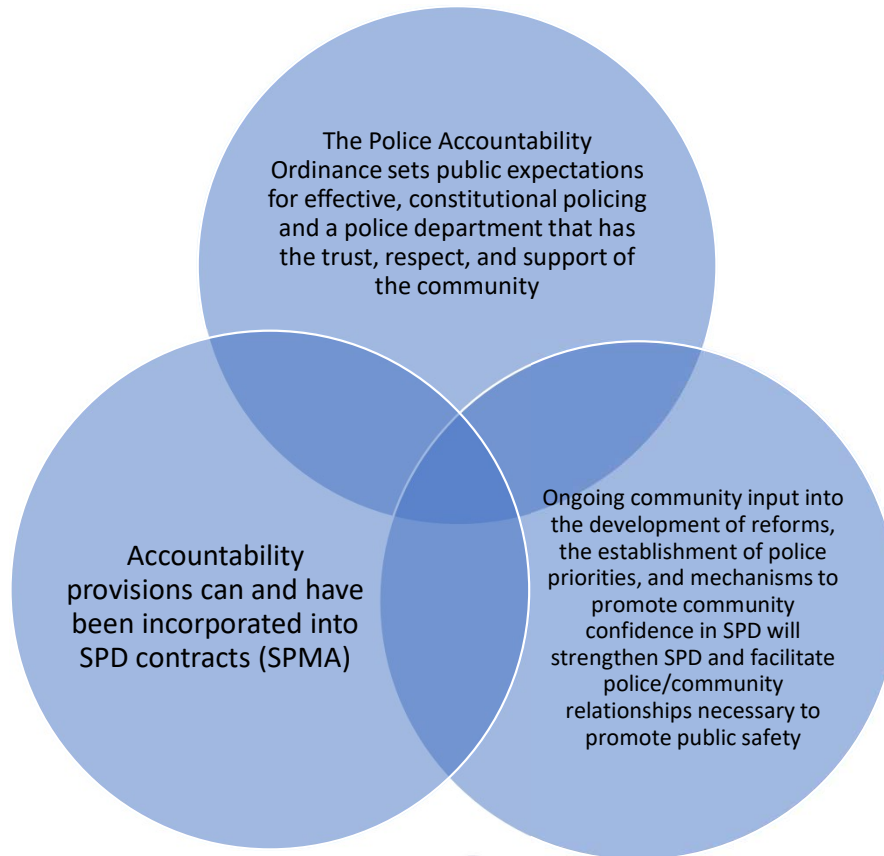
"In the court's view, I shouldn't be able to negotiate collective bargaining agreements. That's why it's a collective bargaining agreement.

To me, the exception to that principle should be when a contract is used to lock in procedures which foster unacceptable police behavior or avoid accountability for improper actions.

In my view, contracts should relate to wages, hours, benefits, and working conditions. They should not shelter officers from City ordinances."



# Accountability Promotes Community Trust



# Questions

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