


Issued Date: February 23, 2026

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

Case Number: 2025OPA-0204

Allegations of Misconduct & Director's Findings

Named Employee #1

1. **Allegation #1: 8.200 - Using Force, 1. Use of Force: When Authorized**
Finding: Not Sustained - Lawful and Proper
 2. **Allegation #2: 5.140 - Bias-Free Policing, 5.140-POL-2 Officers Will Not Engage in Bias-Based Policing**
Finding: Not Sustained - Unfounded
 3. **Allegation #3: 8.100 - De-Escalation, 8.100 1. When Safe, Feasible, and Without Compromising Law Enforcement Priorities, Officers Will Use De-Escalation Tactics in Order to Reduce the Need for Force**
Finding: Sustained
- **Proposed Discipline: Written Reprimand to Nine Hours (One Day) Suspension and Re-Training**
 - **Imposed Discipline: Written Reprimand**
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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:

On May 27, 2025, SPD officers, including Named Employee #1 (NE#1), responded to a crowd control incident at Seattle City Hall, where a religious group organized the "Rattle in Seattle" rally that was countered by protesters supporting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) community. An anonymous complainant alleged that NE#1 used unauthorized force by pushing a bullhorn into Counter Protester #1's (CP#1) face, acted with bias against the LGBTQ community, and failed to de-escalate before using force.

Administrative Note:

On October 15, 2025, the Office of Inspector General certified OPA’s investigation as thorough, timely, and objective.

Summary of the Investigation:

On May 28, 2025, an anonymous complainant submitted an OPA complaint, alleging that NE#1 “assaulted a woman half his size” by pushing a bullhorn “directly into her face.” According to the complaint, CP#1 sustained injuries—including a split lip, bruising on her face, and spots of blood in her eyes—resulting from NE#1’s “attack.”

OPA investigated the complaint by reviewing the computer-aided dispatch call report, body-worn video (BWV), and interview statements from NE#1.

On May 27, 2025, BWV¹ captured NE#1 conducting crowd control at an intersection, where he stood alongside other officers while facing counter protesters. Eventually, CP#1 positioned herself in front of NE#1 and repeatedly shouted, “Trans rights are human rights” into a bullhorn, which was echoed by the crowd.



The green arrow points to CP#1.

CP#1 moved the bullhorn left to right while chanting. CP#1 then aimed the bullhorn directly at NE#1, twice shouted, “Trans rights are human rights” into it, and went closer to NE#1.

¹ The images that follow were taken from NE#1’s BWV.



NE#1 estimated CP#1 to be a foot away from him at this point.

While speaking into the bullhorn, CP#1 told NE#1, "You're pathetic." NE#1 pushed the bullhorn away, causing CP#1 to move it to the right.²



² BWV did not conclusively establish whether the bullhorn contacted CP#1's face.



In the two images above, NE#1's right hand is shown pushing the bullhorn away.

CP#1 lowered the bullhorn to her side and stated, "That's my mouth." NE#1 remarked, "Get that out of my face now." CP#1 told another officer, "Your officer just hit me in the face." Later, NE#1 stepped away and told a sergeant, "So, she put the blowhorn within like a foot in my face, so I pushed her back with the blow hand. So, that's what happened." The sergeant replied, "That's cool. Just chill, dude."

On September 16, 2025, OPA interviewed NE#1. He said the bullhorn was loud, resulting in ear pain, and impaired his ability to work due to the unsafe distraction and safety risk it posed. He said he had forgotten to bring his ear plugs due to the short notice regarding the protest. He said he wished for CP#1 to remain at a distance, rather than be close to him, but she continued using the bullhorn while standing directly in front of him. He said the bullhorn's volume hindered his ability to issue verbal commands, which would have been drowned out by the noise. He said he intended to push the bullhorn away but not toward CP#1. He characterized pushing the bullhorn away as *de minimis* force. He denied intending to use force against CP#1 and the allegation of bias against the LGBTQ community.

Analysis and Conclusions:

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #1

8.200 – Using Force, 8.200-POL-1. Using Force: When Authorized

The Complainant alleged that NE#1 used unauthorized force by pushing a bullhorn into CP#1's face.

Sworn employees will only use objectively reasonable, necessary, and proportional force to the threat or urgency of the situation to achieve a law enforcement objective while protecting the life and safety of all people. SPD Policy 8.200(1). Reasonableness must consider that sworn employees are often forced to make split-second decisions about the amount of force necessary in a particular situation in tense,

uncertain, dynamic, and rapidly evolving circumstances. *Id.* The question is whether the sworn employee's actions were objectively reasonable considering the facts and circumstances confronting them, without regard to their underlying intent or motivation. *Id.* Several factors should be weighed when evaluating reasonableness. *See id.* Force is necessary under the totality of the circumstances when there is no reasonably effective alternative to using physical or deadly force, and the type and amount of physical or deadly force used is a reasonable and proportional response to effect the legal purpose intended or to protect against the threat posed to the sworn employee or others. SPD Policy 8.050 (effective September 1, 2024). Proportional force must reflect the totality of circumstances of the situation, including the nature and immediacy of any threats posed to sworn employees and others. *Id.* Sworn employees must rely on training, experience, and their assessment of the situation to decide an appropriate level of force. *Id.*

BWV did not conclusively establish whether the blowhorn contacted CP#1's face when NE#1 pushed it away. CP#1 claimed it did, yet there were no visible injuries on CP#1's face. No evidence corroborated the level of injury alleged by the anonymous Complainant—that CP#1 had “a split lip, bruising on her face, and spots of blood in her eyes”—nor did such a level of injury appear reasonably likely from the level of force used. Moreover, CP#1 did not express any pain. Even if it contacted CP#1's face, its trajectory—toward CP#1's right side—would likely have resulted in only incidental contact. Thus, a preponderance of the evidence showed NE#1 using *de minimis* force.³ To the extent that NE#1 used *de minimis* force by pushing the blowhorn away, possibly contacting CP#1's face, such force was objectively reasonable, necessary, and proportional. CP#1 approached NE#1 while he was conducting crowd control at an intersection. Without provocation, CP#1 aimed her blowhorn directly at NE#1 while standing roughly a foot away and spoke into it, shouting, “Trans rights are human rights” and “you're pathetic.” NE#1's push was objectively reasonable since the blowhorn closely approached NE#1's personal space and adversely affected NE#1's hearing. NE#1's push was also a necessary and proportional response to prevent CP#1 from continually blaring at him. Overall, OPA finds NE#1's force lawful and proper under these circumstances.

Accordingly, OPA recommends that this allegation be Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper.

Recommended Finding: **Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper**

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #2

5.140 – Bias-Free Policing, 5.140-POL-2. Officers Will Not Engage in Bias-Based Policing

The Complainant alleged that NE#1 acted with bias against the LGBTQ community.

³ *De minimis* force is an action meant to separate, guide, and/or control without using control techniques that are intended to, or are reasonably likely to, cause pain or injury. Examples include, but are not limited to, using hands or equipment to stop, push back, separate, or escort, and using compliance holds without using sufficient force to cause pain. SPD Policy 8.050 (eff. September 1, 2024).

Biased policing means the different treatment of any person by officers motivated by any characteristic of protected classes under state, federal, and local laws, as well as other discernible personal characteristics of an individual. SPD Policy 5.140-POL. It includes different treatment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. *See id.* Officers are forbidden from making decisions or taking actions influenced by bias and expressing prejudice or derogatory comments concerning discernible personal characteristics. *See* SPD Policy 5.140-POL-2.

This allegation is unfounded. NE#1 only reacted to CP#1 because she aimed a blowhorn at him and shouted into it from about a foot away. NE#1 would not have engaged CP#1 but for her act of blaring the blowhorn directly at him. Before this occurred, NE#1 and other officers appeared focused on conducting crowd control and allowed the counter protesters to exercise their First Amendment rights. OPA found no evidence of bias.

Accordingly, OPA recommends that this allegation be Not Sustained – Unfounded.

Recommended Finding: **Not Sustained – Unfounded**

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #3

8.100 – De-Escalation, 8.100-POL-1. When Safe, Feasible, and Without Compromising Law Enforcement Priorities, Sworn Employees Will Use De-Escalation Tactics to Reduce the Need for Force

The Complainant alleged that NE#1 failed to de-escalate before using force.

When safe, feasible, and without compromising law enforcement priorities, sworn employees will use de-escalation tactics to reduce the need for force. SPD Policy 8.100-POL-1. Team approaches to de-escalation are encouraged and will consider sworn employee training and skill level, the number of sworn employees, and whether any sworn employee has successfully established rapport with the subject. *Id.* The totality of the circumstances should guide de-escalation options purposed for voluntary compliance through communication, time, distance, and shielding. *Id.*

OPA finds that, more likely than not, NE#1 failed to use de-escalation tactics in this situation even though they were both safe and feasible. Here, CP#1 had been using the bullhorn in close proximity to NE#1 for about a minute and a half prior to the push. During this time, NE#1 did not issue—or attempt to issue—any orders to CP#1. Immediately prior to NE#1 pushing CP#1’s bullhorn, CP#1 used the bullhorn to scream, twice, “Trans rights are human rights!” At the time of these statements, CP#1’s bullhorn was about the same distance from NE#1 as when he pushed the bullhorn. Also, NE#1 only pushed the bullhorn as CP#1 began to state, “you’re pathetic.” During these exchanges, NE#1 also made no attempt to issue warnings to CP#1. OPA finds that NE#1 could have issued a verbal warning and given CP#1 time to comply before using force. NE#1 cited the bullhorn’s volume as a reason for not issuing a warning, as he believed any warning would have been drowned out by the noise. However, given the proximity between NE#1 and CP#1, as well as the cadence of the bullhorn use, NE#1 could have warned CP#1 during moments when she was not using the bullhorn. Also, instead of hitting the bullhorn, NE#1 could also have tried to

motion to CP#1 with his hands or other non-verbal techniques. See SPD Policy 8.100-POL-1 (providing other communication considerations, such as attempting “non-verbal” communication when “verbal instructions would be inadequate,” and communicating in “a way that demonstrates respect for people’s dignity”). OPA recognizes that CP#1 instigated the encounter by blaring a blowhorn directly into NE#1’s face, but demonstrations are often extremely loud, and SPD itself appeared to be issuing orders through either a bullhorn or long-range acoustic device (LRAD). Under these circumstances, it was both safe and feasible to attempt to de-escalate before using force to push CP#1’s bullhorn, actions which appeared to immediately escalate the assembled crowd.

Accordingly, OPA recommends that this allegation be Sustained.

Recommended Finding: **Sustained**