

May 7, 2024

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507

Dear Mayor Payne and City Councilmembers:

The Social Justice and Equity Commission (SJEC) is pleased to report on the *2023 End of Year Police Auditor Report*. The purpose of our review is to provide a community perspective on the report and highlight areas where systemic improvements in policing could be focused.

A Sub-Committee of the Social Justice and Equity Commission met on Monday, March 11, 2024. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold. First, the Police Auditor shared with the Sub-Committee an overview of the 2023 misconduct complaints and use of force incident reports audited, as well as their operational, policy and training recommendations to OPD. The Sub-Committee asked clarifying questions, shared their insights, and provided a community perspective on the report. Second, the meeting served as an opportunity to “test” some elements of the draft Community Oversight of Law Enforcement recommendations, specifically the structure and format for how a future Community Board will engage with a Civilian Police Auditor.

We want to thank Police Chief, Rich Allen for presenting on the Police Department’s Year in Review from 2023. It provided invaluable context and understanding of the department’s policing data, staffing, priorities, and progress as it relates to Reimagining Public Safety. We also want to thank Tara Parker, Civilian Police Auditor, for her presentation. She provided insight into the steps and expertise required in conducting an audit, needed context and background for understanding her audit findings and the resulting data, and her positive experience working with OPD.

What follows is the Commissions’ input on the *2023 End of Year Police Auditor Report* as well as the Community Oversight of Law Enforcement draft recommendations.

2023 End of Year Police Auditor Report

1. The increase in juvenile arrests compared to 2022 was a key trend identified by the Auditor. If available, the Commission would like to see additional information shared in future reports on juvenile arrests, including race/ethnicity, substance use, mental health status, and housing status to see if these are compounding factors.
2. The Commission was pleased to hear that OPD is integrating Youth De-Escalation Training into the OPD 2024 training schedule.
3. The Commission supports the Auditor’s Recommendations:
 - a) Critical Incident Audits and Reporting. Expediting civilian audits on critical incidents and reporting on the Auditor’s findings immediately, rather than waiting for the Mid-Year or Annual Report will provide the community with increased transparency.

b) Body-Worn Camera Audio Deactivation. The Commission believes that frequent muting of BWC audio may lead to an erosion of trust with the community. The Commission recognizes this is a mandatory subject of bargaining but hopes it can be resolved to avoid the perception that officers are “hiding.”

4. The commission also discussed the Crisis Response Unit and recommends that OPD provide increased transparency regarding their policy and procedures on when CRU responds to calls.

Recommendations for Community Oversight of Law Enforcement (COLE)

The Sub-committee tested some elements of the COLE recommendation, specifically how a future Community Board will interact with a Civilian Police Auditor. Following are recommendations that will be incorporated into the final recommendation:

1. Require that the Civilian Police Auditor and Community Board meet in person.
2. Develop a process for the Community Board to request the Auditor provide an in-depth review of completed use of force investigation(s).
3. Outline that the Community Board reviews the findings and recommendations before submitting them to OPD.

In closing, the Social Justice and Equity Commission appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments and recommendations regarding the *2023 End of Year Police Auditor Report*. We hope the Council finds them helpful. We also look forward to sharing with the City Council the recommendations for enhancing community involvement and oversight in policing later this year.

Sincerely,

Genevieve Chan
Co-Chair, Social Justice and Equity Commission

Parfait Bassale
Co Chair, Social Justice and Equity Commission