



City Council

Washington State Office of Independent Investigations Briefing

Agenda Date: 1/31/2023
Agenda Item Number: 2.A
File Number: 23-0092

Type: study session **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

Title

Washington State Office of Independent Investigations Briefing

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

The Community Livability and Public Safety Committee will be receiving a recommendation from the Social Justice and Equity Commission on a model for Police Oversight in 2023. Knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the Washington State Office of Independent Investigations will inform their recommendation.

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive a briefing on the roles, responsibilities, and status of the new Washington State Office of Independent Investigations

Report

Issue:

Receive a briefing on the roles, responsibilities, and status of the new Washington State Office of Independent Investigations

Staff Contact:

Debbie Sullivan, Assistant City Manager, 360.753.8499

Presenter(s):

Debbie Sullivan, Assistant City Manager

Roger Rogoff, Director, Office of Independent Investigations

Jane Nesbitt, Chief of Staff, Office of Independent Investigations

Hector Castro, Assistant Director of Community Relations and Communications, Office of Independent Investigations

Annette Taylor, Legislative Director, Office of Independent Investigations

Jessica Berliner, Legal and Policy Advisor, Office of Independent Investigations

Tracy Lapps, Assistant Director of Investigations, Office of Independent Investigations

Dana Boales, Equity and Organizational Development Advisor, Office of Independent Investigations

Background and Analysis:

The Legislature created the Washington State Office of Independent Investigations (OII) in 2021 to conduct independent, fair, thorough, transparent, and unbiased investigations of cases that involve law enforcement's use of deadly force. The legislature further intended that the office be grounded in anti-racism. As a unique office in the nation, OII is led by a civilian director and intends to deploy teams that include civilian investigators.

The OII came into existence after widespread public outcry regarding several high-profile fatal police use of force cases. In these cases, the victims were often Black men and women and other people of color. In response, Gov. Jay Inslee created the Governor's Task Force on Independent Investigations of Police Use of Force which made several recommendations, including the creation of an office to conduct investigations that are independent of any police agency or prosecutor's office.

The bill that created OII also created an advisory board to work with the new agency and advise on policies and procedures. This 11-member board includes members of families directly impacted by police use of deadly force, law enforcement, community members, a representative of a federally recognized Washington tribe, a mental health professional, a prosecutor, a defense attorney, and a member of the Criminal Justice Training Commission.

OII is currently budgeted for a staff of approximately 80 that will include both investigators, as well as family and community liaisons. OII is not yet taking cases for investigations, as its director was just appointed on June 16, but is currently engaged in hiring for all positions, as well as finalizing the numerous policies and protocols required to conduct its work. Currently, OII's priorities include: creating policies and protocols; hiring of leadership, investigators, and family/tribal liaisons; training; and outreach to the public.

Staff from the Office of Independent Investigations will discuss the status of standing up the new agency and how they will work with local government and law enforcement agencies.

Climate Analysis:

This project is not expected to have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

Equity Analysis:

The City of Olympia experienced two deadly uses of force incidents in 2022. Although the data is too small to indicate a trend between race and deadly uses of force, the Police Auditor reported in their 2022 annual report to Council that over 81% of all uses of force incidents involved individuals in crisis who appeared to be mentally ill and or impaired by alcohol or drugs. The City is hopeful that when OII evaluates their investigations, looks at trends, and makes policy recommendations the number of community members impacted by deadly use of force will decline. Additionally, when the agency can assume investigations from the City, the community will have increased trust that the investigations are thorough, fair, and without bias.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The Reimagining Public Safety recommendations brought forward to Council from the Community Work Group includes a goal of building trust and legitimacy in the City's public safety system. The community wants to learn more about Washington State's new agency and how it will provide independent and unbiased investigations on severe use of force incidents.

Options:

1. Receive the briefing.
2. Do not receive the briefing.
3. Receive the briefing at another time.

Financial Impact:

There is no financial impact related to this item.

Attachments:

Presentation