



Tacoma Human Rights Commission

# Citizen Oversight of the Tacoma Police Department

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## Committee Members

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## Mission

To improve police accountability and citizen involvement through independent oversight of the police department's processes for investigation of complaints alleging officer misconduct, including, but not limited to, the use of force, profiling, domestic violence, false arrest, and harassment.

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## Structure of the Citizen Oversight

- An **independent office** outside the police department with adequate staffing to effectively review complaint investigations and produce statistical reports in a timely manner. Those hired in the **independent office** positions will require a national background check to determine prior convictions.
- A **citizen review board** comprised of five members appointed by the city council shall monitor and review the work of the **independent office**, engage in community outreach and conduct policy review. Those appointed to review board positions will require a basic, volunteer-centered background check.
- The **independent office** shall maintain a separate office within an existing City department but reporting directly to the City Manager on issues of policy review, findings and recommendations.

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## Functions of Independent Office and Citizen Review Board

- The **independent office** shall monitor the complaint process, including oversight of the initial receipt of complaints and review of the process for determining whether a complaint will be investigated.

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- The **independent office** shall review all internal affairs investigations of complaints filed by officers and citizens and shall ensure that complainants are informed by mail of the findings and final disposition of citizen complaints.
- Oversight of the initial receipt of complaints shall include the ability of the independent office to intake a complaint from a citizen and then forward the complaint to the Police Department for classification and investigation.
- A toll-free phone number will be activated for citizens to call and report incidents of alleged officer misconduct to the **independent office**. The **independent office** will file the report and will file the report with the police.
- The **independent office** shall at a minimum issue annual reports that provide comprehensive statistics, including information (to the extent available) about the types of complaints filed, the number of complaints filed, a breakdown by police sector, the race and ethnicity of the complainants and officer involved, the number/percentage of complaints found to be sustained, exonerated, unfounded or not sustained and any disciplinary actions taken by the Police Department.
- The **citizen review board** shall hold regular public meetings to promote public awareness of the complaint process and to listen to community concerns. The **citizen review board** shall develop a community outreach program that includes a training segment for both officers and citizens regarding the complaint process and its implementation.

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## Authority of Independent Office and Citizen Review Board

- The **independent office** shall be authorized to have confidential access to all internal affairs files pertaining to complaints (including any logs maintained by the police department) after completion of the investigation. The staff of the **independent office** can request that the police department produce additional information regarding specific complaints, the internal affairs caseload, or any police department procedures as may be necessary to perform their functions.

- The **independent office** staff members shall have the authority to attend Internal Affairs interviews, and may present written comments or written questions to the investigator during investigations. The investigator may or may not choose to use those written comments or questions. Any information received during the interview shall remain confidential and subject to the same confidentiality rules as established by Tacoma Police Department.
- The **independent office** shall have access to, and the authority to request reclassification of complaints and inquiries within seven (7) business days of receiving the complaint or inquiry from Tacoma Police Department. It shall have the authority to request clarification or information from the Police Chief on the status of an ongoing investigation. If the Police Chief denies a request for reclassification or a request for information from the **independent office**, the Chief shall explain in writing the reasons for his/her decision. The **independent office** will note all such disagreements in its reports to the City Manager, prior to release to the City Council.
- The **citizen review board** shall have the authority to review police department policies and procedures and make appropriate recommendations. **The citizen review board** shall be authorized to monitor and comment on the work of the **independent office**.
- The **citizen review board** shall have the authority to hold hearings to address policy complaints.

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## Appointment and Qualifications

- The **manager** of the **independent office** shall be appointed by the **City Manager**. Individuals who are appointed by the City Manager cannot be removed from office except for good cause.
- The **citizen review board** shall be appointed by the City Council. Initial appointments shall be made in staggered terms of 1, 2 and 3 years. Members cannot be removed except for misconduct.
- Board members shall be barred from serving more than two consecutive three year terms and not withstanding initial staggered term of less than 3 years.

- The City Council shall actively seek nominees from all the diverse communities in the city. Law enforcement professionals and their family members are eligible to serve as **independent office** staff or on the **citizen review board**, with the exception of current members of the Tacoma Police Department and their immediate family members.

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## Tacoma Police Department Policy Complaints

- When any member of the community has a concern about police policies, procedures or practices, but there is no allegation of individual officer misconduct, a policy complaint may be filed. The policy complaint will be reviewed by the **citizen review board** and the complainant will be notified of the outcome of the review.
- Policy recommendations from the **citizen review board** will be presented to the Police Chief, City Manager and the City Council.

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**Note:** Please contact Solomon Uwadiale, Chair of the **Police Accountability Work Group** for historical background and research in drafting this citizen oversight proposal at 253.566.1994 or [sol@trafton-group.com](mailto:sol@trafton-group.com)