

## Questions for Community Police Commission Executive Director position

1. The Community Survey results stated the top priorities for the next CPC Executive Director as:

- *“Engage 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”*
- *“Review and provide input on the police accountability system and Seattle Police Department (SPD) policies and practices”* and
- *“Maintaining connections with representatives of disenfranchised communities and community groups”*

Please explain your approach to how you will address these priorities.

Each of these priorities comes from the Police Accountability Ordinance 125315, which is our guiding document as an independent Commission. In 2017, the community and city leaders working together made a strong system of civilian oversight of policing part of the laws that govern this city. This system was thoughtfully designed to incorporate community input to build a strength that other cities struggled with in their own civilian oversight systems by including “the voice and values of the community that is being policed.”

**Subsection 3.29.300.D (1)** requires that the CPC engage in community outreach to obtain perspectives of community members on a wide variety of policing-related concerns. Community Engagement is the **most important** work of the Community Police Commission. Led by the work of our full-time Community Engagement staff, the CPC works hard to learn from the lived experiences of a diverse variety of community members, fulfilling our mandate from the accountability ordinance to be “a Community Police Commission charged with significant oversight function intended to serve as a community voice for the entire City which should include voices from all corners of the City so that no geographic area is left out.”

**Subsection 3.29.300.C** requires that the CPC review and provide input on the accountability system overall and SPD policies and practice. Working together with the CPC Co-Chairs, I have had regular meetings with the Monitoring Team and have also provided detailed input to Dr. Richard Rosenthal who is conducting the assessment of the accountability system in Seattle. I have regular meetings with SPD leadership and meetings with oversight partners that are specific to providing feedback on SPD policies. My approach is always to make sure that the CPC maintains regular connections with SPD and that we regularly bring relevant information from and to the Commissioners at CPC Bi-Monthly meetings. The most recent examples of this were a presentation from SPD about Truleo software in October 2023 and a presentation from Chief Diaz after the discovery of the tombstone in the East Precinct in September 2023.

**Subsection 3.29.300.D (2)** requires that the CPC maintain connections with representatives of disenfranchised communities. This occurs through the hard work of our CPC Community Engagement

staff, who regularly connect with community members to hear their concerns about policing at numerous events just in 2023. Please see the answer to Question 2 for more detail on this work.

2. The Community Survey listed the top three qualities the next Executive Director must have to be successful as:

- *“Creates trusted partnerships, builds bridges with disenfranchised communities, and connects with those experiencing police violence”*
- *“Centers race and equity in processes and decisions”*
- *“Lead people and operations to achieve measurable, equitable outcomes” and “Manage complex agency, community, and political relationships”*

Please describe how you have demonstrated these leadership qualities. Please provide specific examples.

According to the Police Accountability Ordinance, the job of the CPC Executive Director (performed in consultation with and under supervision of the CPC Co-Chairs) is to:

- Oversee and manage the functions of the Office of the CPC to advance the mission of the Office.
- Hire, supervise, and discharge employees of the Office of the CPC.
- Manage the preparation of CPC’s proposed budget, authorize necessary expenditures, and enter into contracts.
- Execute, administer, modify, and enforce such agreements and instruments as the Executive Director shall deem necessary to implement programs.
- Represent, together with Commissioners, CPC in providing testimony and expertise to City departments and offices, commissions, and other organizations.

Fulfilling these obligations is my focus as a city employee and a staff member in support of the independent CPC. The 2023 updates to the Police Accountability Ordinance, voted on unanimously by the independent CPC Commissioners, supported unanimously by City Council, and signed into law by Mayor Harrell in July 2023, strengthened the role of the Co-Chairs in providing strategic direction and guidance to the CPC Executive Director under their singular direction, authority and supervision.

With that in mind, I have worked in partnership with the CPC Co-Chairs and CPC Community Engagement staff to create trusted partnerships with disenfranchised communities and connecting with those who experienced police violence. CPC Community Engagement staff has connected with community members and heard their concerns about policing at numerous events just in 2023, including the Rainier Beach Community Health Fair, the city’s Once Seattle Juneteenth 2023 celebration, the FAST (Fathers and Sons Together) Barbershop Conversations Event and many more. At our New Beginnings Annual Report event on August 31, 2023, the CPC was honored to host Rick Williams, brother of John T. Williams, who shared his experiences and desire for peace with community members.

I have supported the CPC Co-Chairs in accomplishing their objectives and centered race and equity in processes and decisions by providing regular, timely information and strategic planning that has helped the Commission move forward in important ways, including recruiting and onboarding five new

Commissioners who are representative of the diverse constituencies required in our governing ordinance and making connections with key stakeholders. As a small department, we have worked to engage staff in the budget development process. Specifically, the CPC Co-Chairs and CPC leadership solicited staff feedback for proposed changes to our governing ordinance, including the budget request for a new FTE Deputy Director for the agency. Staff feedback was incorporated into suggested changes brought to CPC Commissioners, who ultimately voted to support this budget request.

I have worked in partnership with the CPC Co-Chairs to achieve measurable outcomes by supporting Community Engagement staff in tracking their public interactions, supporting public statements and policy letters of the CPC and helping move forward revisions to our governing ordinance. Together, we have worked to re-establish relationships and trust with key accountability partners in the Mayor's office, City Council, Office of Inspector General, Office of Police Accountability and the Seattle Police Department through regular meetings, information sharing, and collaboration.

3. What is your understanding of the history of policing, the impact of racism, and the work of police accountability?

As with many departments nationwide, the Seattle Police Department has a long history of racial discrimination that resulted in brutality towards the communities it was meant to serve. According to Anne Frantilla of the Seattle Municipal Archives, 1955 was when Mayor Allen Pomeroy, working with the ACLU and the Urban League, made the first recommendation of the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Police Practices to address tensions between SPD and Seattle's growing Black community.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the ACLU, Urban League, NAACP, the Seattle Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and Seattle Area Committee on Civil Rights worked tirelessly to address specific incidents of police violence against Black community members and establish some form of independent oversight of SPD. Although a cultural sensitivity training program was established for SPD in 1965, the killings of Black community members Robert Reese in 1965 and Eddie Ray Lincoln in 1966 by SPD officers were ruled as justified, strengthening calls by Seattle's civil rights leaders and the Concerned Central Area Citizens (CCAC) for a police review board. Police shootings and killings of multiple Black residents throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s further galvanized community support and calls for a robust system of oversight to protect residents of Seattle from police violence.

After the shooting of woodcarver John T. Williams by the Seattle Police Department in 2010, 35 organizations signed onto a letter to bring the Department of Justice to Seattle, beginning the consent decree process of reform from which the city is just beginning to emerge. In 2017, the city finally recognized the need to codify the patchwork of accountability systems that had been worked on for so many years by so many community members. This work is ongoing and requires a strong system of accountability that includes community voices. As evidenced by community concern over recent events such as the killing of Jaahnavi Kandula, the response by an SPD officer on body camera footage, and the display of a mock tombstone in the East Precinct, the CPC is a critical partner in this work.

4. How do you connect and communicate to diverse audiences in both formal and informal settings?

Before I came to the City of Seattle, I was an educator, and I can't help but bring these experiences with me to everything I do. As a college professor at the Evergreen State College at their campuses in Olympia and Tacoma, I taught a diverse range of students pursuing the next step of their careers as community leaders through the MPA (Master of Public Administration) program.

In that role, I prioritized learning about public administration through an equity lens. I implemented fundamental reforms in the core curriculum of the MPA program to better address these social needs and the needs of MPA students, making an understanding of institutional racism in research methods central to their learning.

The Evergreen MPA program attracts non-traditional students from a variety of fields and locations in Washington, and I was able to connect with and communicate with students from many different backgrounds to empower all students to learn about statistics, negotiation, research methods, and the legislative process in Olympia. I understand the critical need to implement and engage in authentic diversity practices in all aspects of public work, including as Interim Executive Director of the CPC.

5. Please explain your approach to project and staff management.

Since January 10, 2023, I sought to rebuild the CPC by successfully managing numerous projects that have resulted in measurable changes for the organization. I have guided CPC staff through challenges of sudden and unexpected leadership change and hired four permanent staff. I prepared a budget change request for 2024, including a new position of Deputy Director which was part of the 2023 Police Accountability Ordinance revisions. I prepared for and presented the required Mid-Year Report to the Public Safety and Human Services Committee. I supported CPC staff to carry out a very successful Annual Report meeting with community members, which had not been completed in two years. I stepped in to help the CPC Co-Chairs prepare for and manage local and national media appearances during an intense period after the release of the Officer Daniel Auderer body camera video.

With respect to staff management, since the City of Seattle no longer provides new supervisor orientation training to employees who are suddenly and unexpectedly put into leadership roles, it has been challenging to find the resources needed to support staff management since January 10, 2023. The City relies heavily on pre-recorded trainings on Cornerstone and LinkedIn Learning. However, I have tried to utilize the resources available to me to better understand the expectations of managers in the City of Seattle with respect to staff.

Most recently, I completed the city's Citywide *Emerging Leaders* training, a five-week live training that focuses on Self-Awareness and Emotional Intelligence, Communication and Conflict Resolution, Race & Social Justice Foundations, Career Development, and Leadership Development. Although this training was intended for employees who are not currently in supervisory roles, I found it useful to better understand the expectations of staff management by the City of Seattle. I also attended a session in October sponsored by Seattle Human Resources and the Seattle Management Association called *Leading From the Heart*, which helped me learn more about effective leadership practices for public managers.

6. The Strategic Plan 2022-2024 states:

*“The Deep Learning phase of this strategic planning process revealed that there is a general Community sense that the CPC is neither adequately engaging Community members nor meaningfully involved in Community conversations.*

*CPC public meetings aren’t providing space for conversation and deliberation, are often one-sided, and often focus on complex information that isn’t clear to Community members... Community stakeholders reported feeling there is no mechanism for everyday people to provide input and receive updates. There is also wide confusion as to what the CPC is, how it functions, and the role of Community.”*

Please share your approach to addressing this finding.

While these selected passages from the Strategic Plan are concerning, they are also an opportunity. This CPC Strategic Plan began in 2021 under different leadership and different circumstances in the city. Since then, CPC has experienced significant changes in leadership, staff, and the CPC’s governing ordinance. The CPC Co-Chairs and CPC Staff look forward to developing a new Strategic Plan that addresses these past concerns in light of the transition away from the federal consent decree and the changes to our governing ordinance.

In the meantime, in addition to the extensive re-engagement at in-person events by CPC Community Engagement staff in 2023, including tabling, informal discussions, and other forms of outreach to raise awareness about who the CPC is, I have participated in community events to make direct connections with community members. Most recently, I, along with the leadership of our accountability partners at OIG and OPA, gave a presentation to the Seattle King County NAACP entitled “NAACP conversations with Police Accountability Partners.” In addition to sharing information about the CPC with this historically important group, I was able to follow up directly with attendees at the meeting to learn more about their current concerns.



## 7. How can CPC's status as an independent body be strengthened?

The most important way to strengthen the CPC's status as an independent body is to follow and enforce the provisions of the city's own Police Accountability Ordinance which was the result of many years of hard work and compromise between community members and elected officials.

Subsection 3.29.030.A of the Police Accountability Ordinance speaks directly to the requirement that the CPC, along with our partners at OIG and OPA, be able to function independently and without interference from other city officials:

“OPA, OIG, and CPC have an obligation to exercise independent judgment and offer critical analysis in the performance of their duties under this Chapter 3.29. These oversight entities shall exercise their responsibilities under this Chapter 3.29 without interference from any person, group, or organization, including the Chief, other SPD employees, or other City officials. City employees and agents who violate these provisions may be subject to dismissal, discipline, or censure consistent with City and state laws.”

The Police Accountability Ordinance in section 3.29.330 speaks directly to the independence of the CPC as a self-governing and functionally independent entity at an independent budget control level within the city. The independence of the CPC and its Commissioners is further strengthened in a separate section of the Ordinance (3.29.350) that limits the ability of appointing authorities to remove Commissioners to only for cause.

All city agencies and officials must demonstrate a commitment to the independence of the police oversight system by respecting the legal language that was carefully crafted to preserve the independence of the CPC and all police oversight agencies in Seattle.

8. When you were Policy Director last year, CPC engaged Council on public safety items during budget deliberations. Does CPC plan to continue engaging on budget issues? If so, will that work include seeking feedback from the community on items of particular relevance?

CPC will always seek to reflect community concerns in our engagement on city budget issues. With limited policy staff, the CPC is already tracking budget issues through the City Council process. In addition to CPC's own budget, we are tracking the budgets for SPD, CSCC/CARE, and HSD to learn about Council's priorities for areas that are related to community concerns about policing and related topics (for example, dispatch, which has been our priority for OIG's workplan in 2023 and prior years.)

With a full policy staff including a policy director, we hope to engage with City Council more robustly in the next budget session, especially with new City Council members. CPC is looking forward to meeting with all new members of City Council to help them better understand the Police Accountability system overall, and CPC's unique role.

9. In the past, CPC developed a legislative agenda and lobbied on bills before the state legislature. Do you contemplate that being part of CPC's work plan going forward?

As per the Police Accountability Ordinance subsection 3.29.300.D, the CPC is charged to "Identify and advocate for reforms to state laws that will enhance public trust and confidence in policing and the criminal justice system." As an independent agency, the CPC can pursue a legislative agenda independent from the Executive and always seeks to robustly engage with Olympia on police reform efforts that can have statewide impacts.

In 2023, the CPC voted on a statement of values based on the language of the Accountability Ordinance to allow CPC staff as city employees to provide policy analyses of the city's legislative agenda. CPC Commissioners also voted to support four priority bills of the Washington Coalition for Police Accountability (WCPA), an advocacy group with whom we maintain connections. In the 2024 short session, we plan to again support WCPA's priority bills, and are in the early stages of exploring our own initiatives for this session.

10. What relationship do you see between the mission and work plan of CPC and that of the Community Safety initiative? Do you see any benefit to CPC weighing in on that work and/or engaging with its providers?

CPC Community Engagement staff are just beginning discussions with staff of some of the agencies involved in the Seattle Community Safety initiative. CPC's governing ordinance tasks us to "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." Part of the Community Safety initiative is focused on neighborhood safety and gun violence and, to the extent that involves policing, the CPC seeks to maintain connections and an open line of communication to get feedback from these organizations and share it with our partners.

11. In relation to the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of Police Accountability, how do you see your role with respect to accessibility and collaboration?

My goal has always been to stabilize the CPC by rebuilding trust and communication with all accountability stakeholders, including OPA and OIG. As mandated by the ordinance, we have quarterly partner meetings that include the leadership of CPC, OIG, and OPA, and well as SPD. At these meetings, we discuss a variety of concerns, including policy, events of current interest, and community concerns. For example, in preparation for a presentation on the SPMA bargaining process, we met to share the distinct viewpoints of each agency in the letters we planned to submit to City Council. These meetings are very valuable to maintaining open and regular contact, communication, and collaboration.

CPC has a unique role with respect to our partner accountability organizations because we are specifically charged with providing community input into the process, and have three FTE focused on this important work. To that end, we seek to regularly build connections with our partners and share our findings from the community to inform their own concerns.

12. Having served as the Interim Executive Director of the Community Police Commission for a short time, please tell us what you have learned from this experience?

Since January 2023, I have worked to rebuild the CPC into a functional, resilient, and credible organization that can fulfill its statutory obligations to engage all of Seattle's diverse communities effectively. I believe that my actions in the past ten months are the most credible demonstration of my ability to carry out what I hope to accomplish as CPC Executive Director.

One of the most important things I have learned is encapsulated in the revisions to the accountability ordinance that were passed by City Council and signed into law by Mayor Harrell in July 2023. The CPC was struggling as an oversight partner and required changes to the structure of oversight of the Executive Director and staff, specifically inequity with other oversight agencies.

The lack of a deputy in the original Police Accountability Ordinance significantly weakened the ability of the CPC to withstand the constant organizational change it is subject to due to changing Commissioners. Supporting the CPC Co-Chairs through the process of developing these revisions, getting buy-in from stakeholders, accountability partners, and Commissioners, presenting the revisions to City Council and fielding questions, and ultimately preparing for the budget and office space for a new deputy has given me tremendous insight into how various components of the community and city work together to make change.

I look forward to the opportunity to learn more about the changing system of police accountability as Seattle begins the process of exiting the consent decree.

13. What are your goals for the next three years, if confirmed, and what do you see as the most significant challenges to achieving those goals?

This is a critical time for the City of Seattle, SPD, and the community. While the consent decree is beginning to sunset, we know the work is not over – in fact, the work of accountability requires constant vigilance and a robust system of oversight that must include authentic community input and engagement through the CPC. Valuing community and centering the voices of those most impacted by policing are the stated goals of the City and ones that we too are working towards every day.

Our daily actions and reflections as Commissioners and staff of the CPC will help guide us in our important work in the coming years. At this point in the consent decree process, we must have a civilian oversight system ready to step up and play its role.

The most significant challenges of the next three years include making serious changes to the culture of the SPD that have resulted in damage to community trust in just the past few months, ensuring that the process of negotiation police contracts for SPOG and SPMA do not negotiate away essential accountability provisions, and ensuring that the public can rely on SPD for effective and constitutional policing to address the public safety requirements of a growing and changing city. None of these is simple, or anything that the CPC – or in fact any single part of government – can handle working alone. Instead, these very difficult challenges require communication, collaboration, and trust among and between many different partners with very different goals. My goal is to deliver on the promise of the CPC to be part of this critical work.