

POMONA POLICE OVERSIGHT COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

November 2023 – November 2024

Introduction

The Police Oversight Commission (POC) was established to ensure transparency, accountability, and meaningful community engagement in the oversight of police activities in Pomona. Over the past year, the Commission has worked diligently to create a foundation for its operations, address community concerns, and foster trust between the police department and the community. This report provides a detailed summary of the Commission's activities, accomplishments, and challenges during the first year of operation, and outlines goals for the future.

Commission Structure and Meeting Schedule

The Police Oversight Commission held regular meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. This is a five-member commission, and the members are:

- **Commissioner Eunice R. Russell, Chair**
- **Commissioner Eric Vasquez, Vice-Chair**
- **Commissioner Brian Brooks**
- **Commissioner Hanan Gibani**
- **Commissioner Tremale Ratcliffe**

The structure and regularity of these meetings provided the stability needed to establish the Commission's processes and address community and departmental issues effectively.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

Establishment and Operational Framework

In its inaugural meetings, the Commission focused on foundational tasks such as establishing regular meeting schedules, selecting leadership, and defining its roles and responsibilities. These early actions set the stage for the effective oversight of police activities.

One significant focus was the appointment of an Inspector General to support the Commission's oversight functions. The OIR Group, led by Michael Gennaco, was proposed for this role. After extensive discussion, the Commission worked to ensure transparency in the selection process and alignment with community expectations.

Community Engagement

The Commission prioritized public involvement by providing opportunities for community members to voice their concerns during public comment periods at every meeting. Key topics raised included:

- Police conduct during interactions with the unhoused population.
- Transparency in handling body-worn camera footage.
- Issues regarding youth diversion and other community policing programs.

The Commission also hosted presentations from stakeholders such as:

- **Pomona Unified School District's Student Attendance Review Board (SARB):** Addressing truancy and identifying ways for police to support students.
- **Homeless Encampment Action Response Team (HEART):** Reviewing protocols and addressing public concerns about treatment of unhoused individuals.
- **Office of Violence Prevention:** Highlighting community initiatives aimed at reducing violence.

These presentations fostered dialogue and collaboration between the police department, community organizations, and the public.

Policy Review and Recommendations

The Commission undertook a comprehensive review of the Pomona Police Department's policies and procedures. This included:

- **Use of Force Policy:**
 - Conducted a thorough analysis and provided recommendations to align the policy with modern standards and community expectations.
 - Collaborated with the Inspector General to address areas needing refinement.
- **Body-Worn Camera Footage:**
 - Discussed protocols for editing and releasing footage to ensure transparency while balancing privacy and operational considerations.
- **Monthly Police Reports:**
 - Enhanced the reports to include critical data on youth diversion programs, use of force incidents, and complaint trends, providing greater insights into departmental activities.

Formation of Ad Hoc Committees

The Commission established several ad hoc committees to address specific issues:

1. **Justice 8 Investigation:** Examined allegations of excessive force.
 2. **Public Outreach and Forums:** Commissioners attended events, including the Commander Meetings, to strengthen community-police relationships.
 3. **Use of Force Policy Review:** Proposed updates to ensure policies reflect best practices.
 4. **Annual Report Preparation:** Compiled this comprehensive review to highlight the Commission's progress and future direction.
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Ad Hoc Committee Reports

Justice 8 Investigation Ad Hoc Committee

This committee focused on allegations of excessive force. Collaborating closely with the Inspector General, the committee examined departmental practices and provided recommendations to enhance accountability and transparency. While awaiting final investigative reports, the committee laid the groundwork for future oversight initiatives and procedural improvements.

Public Forum Ad Hoc Committee

The Public Forum Ad Hoc Committee engaged in significant efforts to promote community awareness and encourage public participation in the Commission's activities. Key achievements include:

1. Promoting the Police Oversight Commission at city council meetings through public comment. Community members with police-related concerns were invited to Commission meetings for further discussion and action. These efforts included follow-ups to ensure their issues were addressed and to offer continued support.
2. Collaborating with La Verne Avenue residents to address concerns about parking enforcement related to new bicycle and pedestrian safety initiatives funded by a Pomona PD grant. Residents were encouraged to bring their questions to Commission meetings for transparency and further investigation.
3. Personal outreach to community members through Facebook groups, inviting them to participate in Commission meetings and discussions.
4. Attending the 4th Annual Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement Conference in Los Angeles to learn about different oversight models, legal challenges, and strategies to strengthen oversight. The conference featured various panel discussions and engagement with law enforcement representatives.
5. Identifying roadblocks, including limited access to existing Neighborhood Watch meetings. Efforts to address this included requesting written invitations and fliers with meeting dates to encourage attendance. Feedback indicated that community members want the Commission to resolve issues and create actionable policies rather than hosting forums without follow-up.

6. Planning next steps to engage Neighborhood Watch group leaders directly by visiting communities to build stronger connections and foster collaboration.

Use of Force Policy Ad Hoc Committee

The Use of Force Policy Ad Hoc Committee collaborated closely with the Inspector General to review critical sections of the police policy manual. The committee focused on the following sections:

1. **Section 300: Use of Force** - Reviewed current standards and suggested updates to align with best practices and community expectations.
2. **Section 304: Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths** - Examined protocols to ensure transparency and accountability.
3. **Section 326: Major Incident Notification** - Evaluated notification procedures to improve communication and timeliness.
4. **Section 417: Field Training Officer Program** - Reviewed training practices to ensure new officers are equipped with comprehensive knowledge of use-of-force policies.
5. **Section 433: Crisis Intervention Incidents** - Addressed crisis intervention strategies to enhance outcomes during high-stress situations.
6. **Section 1005: Personnel Complaints** - Analyzed complaint procedures to ensure effective resolution and documentation.

While some updates to the Policy Manual had received prior approval, the policy manual had not yet been updated to reflect these changes. The committee will continue to work with the Inspector General and police department to ensure these updates are implemented and communicated effectively.

Noteworthy Events and Highlights

Community Academy Engagement

Commissioners actively participated in the Police Department's Community Academy, an initiative aimed at fostering stronger relationships between the police and residents. This program provided valuable insights and strengthened community trust.

Homeless Encampment Response

The HEART unit's operations were reviewed, with public feedback highlighting both the program's successes and areas for improvement. The Commission provided recommendations to ensure equitable treatment of unhoused individuals.

Justice 8 Investigation

This investigation into allegations of excessive force demonstrated the Commission's commitment to rigorous oversight and accountability.

Body-Worn Camera Policies

Discussions about the accessibility and editing of footage emphasized the Commission's dedication to transparency while protecting privacy and operational integrity.

Challenges

1. Inspector General Appointment Process:

- Delays in finalizing the appointment highlighted the need for a transparent and collaborative approach.

2. Community Trust:

- Addressing historical issues and rebuilding trust required consistent effort and engagement.

3. Resource Constraints:

- Limited staffing and funding within the police department presented challenges in addressing traffic enforcement and youth diversion programs effectively.
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Future Goals

1. Expand Public Engagement:

- Organize a Community Awareness Day in collaboration with Pomona Unified School District and the Police Department to educate residents on rights and responsibilities when interacting with law enforcement.

2. Strengthen Oversight Mechanisms:

- Enhance the Commission's ability to monitor investigations and complaints.

3. Policy Development:

- Implement recommended updates to the Use of Force Policy and other key areas.

4. Foster Collaboration:

- Continue building partnerships with community organizations and stakeholders to address shared concerns.

5. Continuous Training:

- Ensure Commissioners remain informed about emerging issues and best practices in police oversight.
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Conclusion

In its first year, the Police Oversight Commission has laid a strong foundation for its operations, addressing critical issues and fostering meaningful dialogue between the police department and the community. While challenges remain, the Commission is committed to advancing transparency, accountability, and trust through its ongoing efforts.

Prepared by:

Eunice Russell, Chair

