



2007 Police Accountability Review Panel

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

January 29, 2008

Contact: Judge Terrence Carroll, ret., 206-223-1669
carroll@jdrllc.com

Police Accountability Review Panel Releases Its Final Report *Panel offers 29 recommendations to enhance & strengthen Seattle's police accountability system in 4 areas*

SEATTLE – Today, after seven months of work, the 2007 Police Accountability Review Panel, chaired by Judge Terrence Carroll, ret., released its final report. The panel concluded the general structure of Seattle's police oversight system – with its civilian director, auditor and review board – should continue. The panel found all three components play roles in the oversight process. The panel also found many aspects of the current police accountability system are valuable and encourage an effective citizen-complaint process.

The panel did, however, find room for improvement and provided Mayor Greg Nickels with 29 specific recommendations for enhancing and strengthening the police accountability system in the following four areas:

- Accountability & Public Confidence
- Independence
- Professional Conduct
- Transparency

“After several months of public hearings and deliberation, this very diverse group of citizen panelists has reached consensus on 29 recommendations that will serve to strengthen an already viable system of police accountability,” Carroll said. “We strongly urge the mayor, Council, Police Department and Guild representatives to work together on this all important issue of the accountability of the police discipline system. We are grateful to those who provided information and comments which proved critical for the panel to complete its work.”

“Accountability for the police department as a whole is as important as accountability for individual officer conduct. They are linked together. Both are critical for the health of the department and for the trust the community has for the police,” said Bob Boruchowitz, panel vice chair and visiting clinical professor of law at Seattle University. “The annual review that we recommend of police policies and practices, beginning with how the Department interacts with people of color, will provide information and ideas that will help the police to do an even better job and to increase the trust of the community.”

-- more --

“This panel’s recommendations are critical to ensuring increased independence, transparency and accountability, and engendering public confidence. In particular, the strengthened independence of both the OPA auditor and the OPA director are clear improvements to our existing system,” said Pramila Jayapal, panel member and executive director of Hate Free Zone.

The panel’s recommendations focus on the following areas:

- Expanding the role of the OPA auditor;
- Increasing independence and authority of the OPA director;
- Establishing the OPA Review Board as the key link to the community;
- Maximizing public access to information regarding the accountability system;
- Maintaining the highest professional standards; and
- Enhancing the cooperation and coordination of the OPA entities.

On June 29, 2007, Nickels appointed an 11-member panel to perform a thorough and comprehensive review of Seattle’s police accountability system. The Police Accountability Review Panel completed its work in January 2008.

The panel members were: Judge Terrence A. Carroll, ret., chair; Bob Boruchowitz, vice chair; Jenny A. Durkan; Lorena González; Pramila Jayapal; Gary Locke; Hubert G. Locke; Judith Krebs; Mike McKay; Norman B. Rice; and Jennifer Shaw.

Seattle’s multilayered police oversight structure is unique. Seattle’s current system has operated for six years and has three separate components:

- the Office of Professional Accountability, which is responsible for receiving and investigating complaints of misconduct and making recommendations to the police chief;
- the OPA auditor, which is responsible for auditing completed case files and reviewing and making recommendations on pending investigations; and
- the OPA Review Board, which is responsible for reviewing the OPA complaint process and resolving disputes between the auditor and the police chief.

The OPA director is nominated by the mayor and confirmed by the Council. Under city law, OPA directors can serve a maximum of six years. The mayor also appoints, subject to Council confirmation, the auditor, an independent civilian contractor. Under city law, OPA auditors can serve a maximum of three two-year terms. The OPA Review Board is a three-member citizen panel created and appointed by the City Council.

A copy of the report’s executive summary is included with this news release. A copy of the panel’s entire report may be downloaded from the panel’s Web site:

<http://www.seattle.gov/policeaccountabilityreviewpanel/>