

**Seattle
Community
Police Commission**

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NEWS RELEASE

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CPC'S POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY RECOMMENDATION REGARDING SPD'S STATEMENTS DURING ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS

(Seattle) – In the past, City leaders and the Seattle Police Department (SPD) have discussed incidents prematurely and made statements that undermined the credibility and objectivity of investigations involving critical or high profile incidents such as a police shooting. Pressure on the Department to prematurely disclose facts pertaining to a police shooting or other critical incident is understandable in the name of transparency. However, these calls for disclosure now inadvertently push the Department to return to problematic practices of the past which undermined the chances of a fair investigation that did not presuppose that the officer's act was justified. Any account of what happened by SPD leadership or spokespeople necessarily involves factual conclusions that are premature pending a full and fair investigation. The Seattle Police Department should not compromise the actual and apparent legitimacy of the investigation process by commenting prematurely on the facts. In cases with so much at stake, in the name of genuine accountability, getting it right needs to trump speed.

Consequently, the Community Police Commission included in its police accountability system recommendations of April 2014 that SPD establish a public response protocol for major or high profile incidents. Specifically, the Department should develop a protocol to ensure that SPD maintains neutrality at all stages of incident reviews so that there is no question for either the public or employees that there will be an objective investigation process.

Recommendation 8 states that the response protocol should include immediate acknowledgement and concern about the incident, a neutral Departmental stance, a clear commitment to conducting a full and fair investigation, and information concerning the type of investigation to be conducted and its timeline. As part of this protocol, the Seattle Police Department should commit to correcting as soon as possible any inaccurate information it may have previously released. These components ensure accountability, transparency and timeliness without sacrificing the integrity and credibility of the investigation.

To learn more about the Community Police Commission, please visit www.seattle.gov/community-police-commission.

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