



City of Spokane—Media Release

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MAYOR, CHIEF SUPPORT CREATION OF OMBUDSMAN FOR OVERSIGHT OF POLICE

Consultant recommends model as a good fit for Spokane

Mayor Dennis Hession and Police Chief Anne Kirkpatrick today laid out a plan to proceed with the creation of an ombudsman/monitor that would provide external oversight of the Spokane Police Department.

The Mayor and the Chief also released a 39-page report prepared by Sam Pailca, who was hired by the City to propose an oversight model. Pailca, who also served as Director of the Office of Professional Accountability for the Seattle Police Department for the last six years, recommended the ombudsman/monitor concept in that report.

“I believe very strongly that government must be open and accountable to its citizens,” says Mayor Dennis Hession. “Eighty percent of major cities have some form of oversight, and as Spokane continues to grow and move toward becoming ‘best in class,’ we need a new approach to police oversight that allows us to reach new levels of professionalism and expertise. Creation of an ombudsman for police oversight is yet another way to be responsible to our citizens.”

“Improving citizen oversight has clearly been a priority since I joined the Spokane Police Department,” says Chief Kirkpatrick. “This model will provide us with professional review of citizen complaints and a way to build greater confidence in our police force.”

According to Pailca, the ombudsman model would feature independence, transparency, professionalism, and a process for meaningful review. “The input and review definitively pointed in a new direction: the creation of a new structure that presents a strong, but balanced approach to oversight,” Pailca wrote in her report. Also in the report, she said, “All indicators point to a conclusion that, in Spokane, the necessary foundation for success is in place.”

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Mayor Hession and Chief Kirkpatrick have identified a number of steps necessary to proceed with this plan and have assigned staff to these tasks, including:

- Negotiation with the Police Guild and the Lieutenants & Captains Association.
- Evaluation of the costs of the office and identification of an office location.
- Development of an enabling ordinance and any other necessary legislative changes.

They are hopeful that these steps can be completed within the next six months, allowing for full implementation of an ombudsman office in 2008.

Pailca's report and recommendation were based on information gathered at City-sponsored and ACLU-sponsored citizen forums, emails and other input from citizens, and meetings with key stakeholders, including members of the City Council's Public Safety Committee, members of the Police Advisory Committee and the current Citizens Review Commission, Police employee representatives, and others interested in this issue.

She notes that the Spokane Police Department "enjoys a solid degree of trust and support" and that Spokane has "an informed, engaged citizenry with high expectations for accountability, and a firm commitment to external oversight."

The report is available on-line at www.spokanecity.org. There will be opportunities for citizens to provide input during this process as part of City Council deliberations. Citizens also can comment on the report and its findings by emailing policeoversight@spokanecity.org.