

**Kathryn Olson, Director  
Office of Professional Accountability  
Seattle Police Department  
610 Fifth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124**

October 9, 2012

The Honorable Mike McGinn  
Mayor, City of Seattle  
600 Fourth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Mayor McGinn:

Thank you for your support and encouragement in my work as Director of the Office of Professional Accountability (OPA). I am grateful for the opportunity and privilege to have served in this position for over 5 years and for your confidence in offering me reappointment to May 2013. Because it is vital that the City and Seattle Police Department demonstrate their commitment to police reforms, I look forward to assisting with implementation of the Settlement Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Justice (DOJ). However, I have decided not to pursue a third term as OPA Director, and seek your guidance as I prioritize my work in the coming months.

Though DOJ found that “the OPA system is sound,” the Community Police Commission (Commission) will review Seattle’s three-prong civilian oversight structure [OPA, OPA Auditor and OPA Review Board] to determine if there are changes it would recommend. I worked closely with the Police Accountability Review Panel and Seattle City Council Police Accountability Panel in 2007 and 2008 as they considered improvements to Seattle’s oversight system. Similarly, as the Commission’s work gets underway, I expect to be called upon to provide information about police oversight in general, and OPA’s system of checks and balances in particular. My experience as President of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) and in speaking around the country about the strengths and weaknesses of alternative oversight models will be useful in working with the Commission.

Consistent with observations made by OPA Auditors over the years, DOJ recognized that OPA’s “investigations of police misconduct complaints are generally thorough, well-organized, well-documented, and thoughtful,” an achievement that I have worked hard to build and maintain. Of course, there is always room for improvement and a commitment was made with DOJ to complete the development (already underway) of a manual that details best practices used by OPA. Also, under both the 20/20 Initiatives and Settlement Agreement, I have been overseeing the creation of a system of OPA liaison officers to help facilitate OPA’s work and extend accountability expectations throughout the Department. I will work with the DOJ Monitor and others to implement these and related agreements that involve the work of OPA.

I am proud of the strides that have been made in police accountability and transparency during my tenure as OPA Director. By a variety of objective measures, including the quality of investigations, thoroughness of reports, and extent of outreach, OPA is successfully fulfilling its mandate. I appreciate that OPA can be doing even more to assure the community that police misconduct is identified and addressed. While continuing to demand high quality investigations of OPA complaints, I look forward to working with you as we explore other ways to build trust between the Seattle Police Department and community during my final months as OPA Director.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Olson  
Director, Office of Professional Accountability

cc: Chief John Diaz  
Seattle City Council President Sally J. Clark  
Seattle City Councilmember Bruce Harrell, Chair, Public Safety, Civil Rights and Technology  
Committee  
OPA Auditor Judge Anne Levinson (Ret.)  
OPA Review Board