



KING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
516 Third Avenue, W-116
Seattle, WA 98104

Mitzi G. Johanknecht
Sheriff

August 8, 2020

To: Councilmember Girmay Zahilay, Chair of Law and Justice Committee

From: Undersheriff Patti Cole-Tindall

Re: Independent Investigations

The King County Sheriff's Office is open to discussing various models for independent investigations conducted by OLEO. Although agreement on the subject of independent investigations could not be reached between King County labor negotiators and the King County Police Officers Guild (KCPOG) during bargaining for the 2017-2021 contract, the parties did agree to a joint education process to be conducted in 2021 before negotiations begin for the next contract.

In a Memorandum of Agreement, signed by Bob Railton, King County Deputy Director of Labor Relations and Steve Eggert, former President of KCPOG, the parties memorialized a plan to jointly explore other police agencies across the country that use civilian oversight models, including those that conduct "independent, fair and impartial investigations." The parties discussed conducting joint site visits to various civilian oversight offices and police agencies across the country to explore how they conduct credible independent investigations, learn from their successes and failures, and review their policies and best practices. Once information is gathered, the parties agreed to then meet in good faith to find common ground, discuss their observations, consider various models and share concerns prior to the commencement of negotiations in 2021 for the next labor contract.

As then Chief of Technical Services for KCSO, I participated in the negotiations for the 2017-2021 contract. The OLEO memo on independent investigation models does not acknowledge the MOA or the agreed upon joint education effort. While we agree that seeking community input is vital, I believe the joint education effort is a positive step and should move forward in 2021 as planned, with careful consideration of the challenges of travel and COVID 19. Conducting this national research will be a critical part of determining the most successful model for independent investigations. It is my hope that representatives from Council can also participate in the joint education effort as well.