



INFORMATION REPORT

COUNCIL MEETING

JAN - 9, 2018

DATE: November 27, 2017

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

DEPARTMENT: City Council – Public Safety Committee

SUBJECT: Public Safety Committee Report of Police Department Professional Standards Unit Investigations for Fiscal Year 2016/2017

The City Council's Public Safety Committee (Committee) is charged with reviewing public safety issues, including City policies and procedures, and the Independent Police Auditor function. Annually, the Committee completes a review of the Police Department Professional Standards Unit investigations and issues a final written report. On behalf of the Committee, the attached report has been prepared for the City Council regarding its review of Police Department Professional Standards Unit investigations during the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year.

As background, the Police Department Professional Standards Unit investigations are initiated through either citizen complaints or internally generated questions regarding police conduct. The Police Department's Professional Standards Unit then investigates these complaints and issues findings. These findings are subsequently reviewed by a Deputy Police Chief and the Independent Police Auditor. The Auditor's findings on each case are then forwarded to the City Manager's Office. Each summer, the Committee reviews the cumulative investigations from the preceding twelve (12) months. Typically, the Committee issues a report to the City Council in December of each year.

In June 2017, the Committee, which included Mayor Cynthia Chase, Vice Mayor David Terrazas (Chair), and Councilmember Richelle Noroyan (Vice Chair), conducted its review of the six (6) completed investigations which took place during 2016/2017 Fiscal Year and discussed them with the Independent Police Auditor and Police Department staff. The attached annual report is a summary of the Committee's review of the cases.

Submitted by:

David J. Terrazas
Councilmember and Chair, Public Safety Committee

Attachments:

2016 Public Safety Committee Report of Police Department Professional Standards Unit Investigations

Santa Cruz City Council Public Safety Committee
Review of Police Complaints for 2016
Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Final Report
October 26, 2017

The Santa Cruz City Council Public Safety Committee (Committee) held its annual review of the Santa Cruz Police Department Professional Standards Unit (Professional Standards Unit) investigations on Monday, June 5, 2017 at a Special Closed Session Meeting. On this date, Committee Members (Committee Vice Chair and Councilmember Richelle Noroyan, Mayor Cynthia Chase, and Committee Chairperson and Vice Mayor David Terrazas) conducted their review of the six (6) investigations that were completed during the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year.

The Committee met with Independent Police Auditor Robert Aaronson; Lt. Jose Garcia, assigned to the Professional Standards Unit; and Deputy Chief Rick Martinez as part of their review process. The Professional Standards Unit is responsible to, and reports directly to, the Chief of Police and is responsible for investigating any complaint as assigned to the unit by the Chief of Police.

Meeting Summary

The background report prepared for the Committee provided a history of the Professional Standards Unit's investigations completed during the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year. Of note, the report highlighted the increasing number of retirements and promotions that have occurred since the prior reporting period. In fact, since the date of the June 5, 2017 Special Closed Session Meeting, the Santa Cruz Police Department has seen the retirement of former Chief of Police Kevin Vogel and the installation of Chief of Police Andrew Mills. The report highlighted this period of renewal and transformation taking place in the department. Furthermore, the report referenced the organizational challenge of many employees learning their new roles, as well as the risk of the loss of institutional knowledge. The Committee will be receiving a report during the next year that will review and make recommendations for Police and Park Ranger staffing.

The Committee expressed appreciation for the report and its continuation of supporting reporting detail that had been previously provided by prior Committee discussions. There were no significant corrections in regards to the presented work. Overall, the work is admirable and each of the investigations was completed with professionalism, competency, and objective analysis. The Committee and Professional Standards Unit should be mindful of the Independent Police Auditor's recommendation for the Professional Standards Unit to establish timelines to complete investigative reports. The Independent Police Auditor had previously provided guidance so that: 1) Complainants should be contacted (either by phone, email, or regular mail) within seven (7) days of the receipt of the complaint; 2) Witnesses should then be interviewed within thirty (30) days and subject officers within sixty (60) days; and 3) Deputy Chiefs should review the formal Internal Affairs report on a more expeditious basis. The Independent Police Auditor recommended that no more than an additional thirty (30) days should be allowed for the Deputy Chiefs to complete their final analysis.

At the June 5, 2017 Committee Meeting, Committee Members expressed agreement with the findings of the Independent Police Auditor for the reviewed cases. Sergeant Gomez' background information regarding his investigatory work provided a detailed overview of each case with associated administrative response. The six (6) cases reviewed addressed a range of issues. Most significant was a case which involved an officer who was subject to a personnel investigation for misconduct and case involving an investigation for the failure of an officer to write a mandatory report. The Police Department's investigation demonstrated a structure that holds officers accountable for performance shortcomings and ongoing adherence to Police Department and City Policies and Procedures.

The Committee again recognized the skilled analysis and review of the Santa Cruz Police Department investigations by Independent Police Auditor Robert Aaronson. As was also noted in previous Committee reports, the Independent Police Auditor has offered his availability for future Committee meetings outside of the annual review meeting upon request. The Committee should review the current budget allocation for the funding of the Independent Police Auditor's work and make recommendations to the City Manager for the 2018/2019 Fiscal Year Budget.

Conclusion

The Committee finds that the Professional Standards Unit investigations and other assigned duties continue to be administered in a highly proficient and professional manner. In accepting the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year Investigatory Report, the Committee recognizes the essential role that this department plays in upholding applicable laws and adequately investigating complaints or inquiries for resolution. Their professional work and the work of the entire Santa Cruz Police Department underscore a commitment to public safety in Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz City Council Public Safety Committee

Vice Mayor David J. Terrazas, Chairperson

Mayor Cynthia Chase, Committee Member

Councilmember Richelle Noroyan, Committee Vice Chair