

Subject: Questions, concerns about oversight board applications from former PAC

From: Debbie Aiona

Date: March 5, 2025 at 4:20:33 PM PST

To: "Brown, Heidi" "Ames, Sarah"

To City Attorneys Heidi Brown and Sarah Ames

Hello from former members of the Police Accountability Commission. We are writing with questions and concerns about the _process_ that got the applications for the Community Board for Police Accountability written and posted, and the _content_ of the invitation notice both on the city's jobs website and the City's main website.

As you will recall, feedback from former PAC members led to meaningful (though not exhaustive) changes when the City Code was being written and presented. We hope these questions might lead to better informing and involving the community in a new oversight system that is explicitly designed to be community-led. This is especially important when looking at this process, including the development of the invitation and application.

We want to start by expressing our thanks that the Board is moving forward to being established. We also appreciate that the City's values are listed in the invite letters and the application itself.

Here are our questions:

1) Was anyone other than the City Attorney's office involved in drafting the invitation and the application?

a) --We have heard that Kristen Thorp, the staff person charged with the initial start-up of the CBPA, did not begin work until mid-February. Was she involved, and if so, can that be made clear?

b) --Were any City Council members, community members or police involved in reviewing the application and documents before they were posted?

2) Why was information about the applications being open published at 5:30 PM on a Friday night? *-1

3) Has or will the information be sent to those on the Police Accountability Commission's distribution list?

a) --People who attended those meetings were informed by the PAC staff members that they would receive notice when applications were ready.

4) How were decisions made to include information that is not in the Charter or the City Code?

a) --Why is it stated that CBPA meetings will take place monthly and on weekday evenings?

a1) ---> Hearings for the Police Review Board take place during the day. Won't it be up to the CBPA and participating City staff including the Police Bureau to determine when meetings will occur?

b) --The invitation on the jobs website says the City wants "people from every part of Portland here to share their voice on this committee, especially people who have not been involved before." Why not say "including people who have not been involved before?"

b1) ---> The existing language seems to discourage people who served on the Citizen Review Committee, the Police Review Board or the Police Accountability Commission from applying. These folks will have a great amount of experience to lend the new Board. This discouragement of a variety of experiences is a barrier to get a well rounded CBPA to avoid potential pitfalls.

5) Why were contentious requirements left out of the invitation notices?

a) -- The invitations mention the required background checks, but not the language that developed from PAC's plan. City Code provides for authorities to grant waivers to allow access to information, and City Administrator decides if a person passes the check.*-2

a1) ---> The application should include a blank under the question about the background check for people who wish to be forthcoming about issues that might arise.

b) -- The invitations talk about training, but do not explicitly mention the requirements to go on police ridealongs or attend community academy.

b1) ---> There is also no mention that training will include hearing from people who've been "negatively impacted by police interactions."

b2) ---> We recommend that the application itself have a space under the question about whether people are willing to participate in all trainings (#10) for comments.

6) There is no indication of which City program area is in charge of the CBPA. We understood it was to be under City Operations due to similarities with the Bureau of Human Resources. Has that changed?

Notably, we are cc'ing both the Labor/Workforce and Community/Public Safety Committee members, but it does seem a conflict of interest if the City Administrator for Public Safety (instead of for Operations) will be determining whether people pass their background checks, for instance.

We hope that it's not too late to make amendments to these documents as suggested. We believe following through and making amendments will improve community response and trust in the new system.

Thank you

Debbie Aiona
Faythe Aiken
Cameron Browne
Dan Handelman
Seemab Hussaini
Charlie Michelle-Westley
Christian Orellana Bauer
Tim Pitts

Former members of the Police Accountability Commission

*1- from the page information at
<https://www.portland.gov/hello/news/2025/2/28/city-accepting-applications-community-board-police-accountability>

*2- City Code 35.20.010 E
<https://www.portland.gov/code/35/all>

cc: Independent Monitor
US Department of Justice
Judge Michael Simon
Council Committees on Labor and Public Safety
Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing
Citizen Review Committee