

# Port of Seattle

## Police Civil Service Commission

Commissioner Oris Dunham  
Commissioner Debrena Jackson Gandy  
Commissioner Kirk Merrill

**October 01, 2019**  
**Police Civil Service Commission**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Approved 10/6/2020**

**Call to Order:** Commissioner Oris Dunham called the October 01, 2019 meeting of the Port of Seattle Police Civil Service Commission to order at 10:03 am.

**Roll call/In Attendance:**

Commissioner Oris Dunham – Chair  
Commissioner Kirk Merrill  
Ericka Singh, PCSC Secretary, Human Resources  
Anne Purcell, PCSC Legal Counsel, Port of Seattle Attorney Services  
Brandy Brown, PCSC Administrative Support, Human Resources  
Chief Rodney Covey, Port of Seattle Police Department  
Deputy Chief Mike Villa, Port of Seattle Police Department  
Deputy Chief Mark Thomas, Port of Seattle Police Department  
Derek Bender, Sr. Talent Acquisition Representative

**Absent**

Commissioner Debrena Jackson Gandy – Vice Chair

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner Dunham moved to approve the minutes from the January 15, 2019 meeting. The motion was second by Commissioner Merrill and it was unanimously carried.
2. **Approval of Agenda:** Commissioner Dunham moved to approve agenda for the October 01, 2019 meeting. The motion was second by Commissioner Merrill and it was unanimously carried.
3. **Public Comments:** No public comments were offered.
4. **Order of Business**
  - a. **New 2020 Positions**

Last year the Police Department had a 56% increase in Police and Fire calls and year-to-date for 2019, a 19% increase in calls. This combined with the increase in

officers and traffic support specialists, the current staffing levels of the support staff was unable to meet the needs of the department. Port of Seattle Police Department was approved for two additional support staff positions in 2020: Communication Specialist (Dispatch) and Police Specialist. The Police Specialist will be one of two Records Specialists.

This will bring the department personnel count to 167 people.

**b. POSPD Thematic Goal**

The POSPD recently had a Command Staff retreat and identified a Thematic Goal for the department to focus on. The question was posed: “What is the most important thing we as a department should focus on improving over the next 12 months?” Out of that conversation, the largest issue was the amount of overtime asked of the officers. Upon analysis the OT incurred is the result of understaffing and unfilled positions within the department.

Based on this information, the goal over the next 12 months is to fill 100% of the open positions in the department. At this time there are 7 open officer positions, with 2 to be filled in October, making it 5 open positions, plus the 2 new positions granted in 2020.

Once all the officer positions are filled, and OT is decreased across the department, a case can be made to increase the number of officers in the department to support the growing need at the airport and seaport.

**c. Auto Theft Task Force Position**

Auto theft is a significant issue in our region. At this time, Washington State is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation with the highest rates of auto theft. This year the POSPD joined the Puget Sound Auto Theft Task Force.

This is the first time that the POSPD has been a part of that. This requires that one officer be dedicated to the task force. Grants that fund the task force are used to reimburse the Port the full salary of the officer on the task force.

The Port of Seattle has had an 54% increase in car thefts, while the municipalities who participated in the PSATTTF saw a decrease.

The thefts have occurred mostly in the airport parking and the rental car facility. Downtown at the Bell Harbor Parking garage, car prowls are more common than theft.

Officer Courtney Muse has been assigned to the task force.

**d. Communications Center Update**

With the recent retirement of Kathy Baskin, the Communication Center Manager, Stacy Wassall has been promoted to the manager position. Stacy has been with

the dispatch center for 15 years. The center currently consists of 16 dispatchers and 3 Supervisors. There will be one more dispatcher (new position) starting in 2020.

Stacy's promotion leaves 1 supervisor position currently open, which is now the focus to fill. The Dispatch Center is also expecting 2 retirements in 2020.

Another area of focus is the technology concerns and challenges in the communication center. The goal of upgrading hardware and software so that we can work more efficiently with the current staffing.

**e. BLEA TAC Officer Position**

For the first time in 6 years the Police Department is able to provide a dedicated officer to the BLEA (Basic Law Enforcement Academy) TAC (Teacher Administrator Counselor) program in Burien, WA. This position is 100% reimbursable to the Port. No cost to the Port of Seattle.

This is an opportunity to develop an officer and great exposure to leadership styles outside of the department. The last officer, Lisa Drake, used the experience to prepare for the Commander Process and was one of 3 officers promoted to that position within the department.

The appointment is also a way to give the department great exposure. The department has worked hard to become one of the great agencies not just in Washington, but the entire Pacific Northwest. The exposure and our reputation is a draw for applicants to the department.

Officer Leland Allen has been appointed to this position. He came to us via Seattle Police Department. Officer Allen has exceptional people skills, works with area high schools and is an excellent candidate for training new officers.

**f. Sergeants Process**

The sergeants' process is expected to be processed in the first quarter of 2020. The department has had very little turnover in command staff and sergeants. The command staff is expected to remain quite stable, as they are new to their positions within the last 6 years.

The sergeants are very similar and quite stable. The goal is to convert one of the Traffic Support Specialists to a Sergeant position. The program has been an excellent addition to the department. It started as a smaller pilot program, so at the time current sergeants, who were already supervising their own patrol squads, were assigned to provide leadership and supervision to the Traffic Support Specialists. Now that the program has been made permanent and been expanded, we will be able to provide a specific sergeant to that group. We will be testing for that position in 2020.

The department will also be working with HR to create a new position for the new airport Drug Interdiction Unit for testing as well. This position will be self-funded through its seizures/drug interdiction funds.

Sergeants process will be a partnership with Human Resources, Department and Public Safety Testing.

**g. Hiring Process Update: Lateral & New Hires**

As many people know, the hiring and retaining of new officers has seen a decline not just regionally, but nationally. The department is currently assessing their process and examining best practices to see where there can be improvements, specifically in the testing process since there is a 72-73% failure rate on applicants in backgrounds currently.

One goal is to revamp the oral boards. There has been some guidance with Human Resources on how to address follow-up questions to get a better grasp of the candidate's knowledge base. Also, beyond just looking at a score, a way to speak with and get feedback from the oral board panel.

Some disqualifying questions with backgrounds have been moved up into the pre-employment questions. Some specific questions that we include and are unique to our population is about how they manage diversity and why they want to work at the Port of Seattle. What specifically is their motivation for coming to our department?

Other items that the department has been considering is attracting new candidates for the process. Some local agencies have moved to assign a take home car for each of their officers and even a hiring bonus. However, to assure that we are getting candidates that fit within the department's values-based culture at the Port, those incentives may not be the best way to attract the type of candidate we are looking for. One possibility is a recruiting bonus that is currently being reviewed by HR and our Legal Counsel.

At this time, the department is looking to hire 15 positions over the next year to reach the 100% staffing level goal.

**h. Tattoo Policy**

Tattoos are new to the Port and many police departments. Historically, tattoos have been a disqualifying item. Over time it has transitioned to allowing tattoos that can be covered up and are not offensive in nature. Recently, the trend for tattoos has seen more that extend down the arms to the hands, on the necks and some face tattoos, decreasing the number of eligible candidates. Recently, tattoos that show are being more acceptable as long as the tattoo is not offensive in nature. There is also the need to address cultural traditions with tattoos, e.g. Pacific Islanders. Face and neck tattoos remain an automatic disqualifier for the POSPD and many police departments in the region.

The department is looking for additional feedback from stake holders, including the Police Commissioners.

Commissioners state that face tattoos could be seen as an issue, but cultural differences do need to be taken into consideration. Also, the practice of creating additional barriers to candidates becoming a police officer.

When it comes to offensive tattoos, most candidates self-report.

The idea is to balance the trends and cultural expressions, with what the public sees as a Police Officer.

**i. New Drug Interdiction Unit Position**

The Drug Interdiction Unit began in the last year and has seized large quantities of drugs and drug-related money. This position is self-funded with narcotic and money seizures. This position does not go against the department's budgeted FTE (Full Time Employee) count.

Currently 2 officers and 1 K9 comprise the team. This year there has been 1.7 million dollars in seizures. They are making multiple contacts a week with seizures weekly.

The DEA does not have a post at the airport, however the Interdiction Unit does work closely with HSI (Homeland Security Investigations).

**j. Succession Planning for Chief, Deputy Chief & Commanders**

There is nothing more import than having a good succession plan in the department because of the uniqueness of the work that is done and the information that you must have to function in an environment like the airport.

Chief Covey has publicly announced that he will be retiring on June 30, 2022. That is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Department. The Chief's goal is to get Deputy Chiefs ready for the position of Chief of Police, as well as the command staff ready for a Deputy Chief.

The goal is to promote internally and to not have to go outside of the department to promote a Deputy Chief.

**k. POSPD Accomplishments**

- Four Officers will be receiving a Life Saving Award to be presented by the individual saved.
- In the last two years, no less than a dozen lives saved.
- Commander Jeff Selleg receive the National Tactual Officers Association John Kolman Leadership Award. This is an award that is only given to one officer in the county and is not always awarded annually.
- The Drug Interdiction Unit is doing exceptional work.

- Three new K9s.
- First female bomb tech at the Port of Seattle.
- Bowling with Badges and Breast Cancer Awareness Participation.
- Hosting Coffee with a Cop on October 2.
- Officer Charles Saguil participated in the World Police Fire Games in China in wrestling and Jujitsu. He earned a silver and bronze medal.

No other business was presented.

The meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Merrill at 11:13 AM