

**BURLINGTON POLICE COMMISSION POLICY**  
**Role of the Burlington Police Commission in Reviewing Complaints Against BPD**  
**Employees**  
**Adopted August 25, 2020**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to support principles of fair and impartial policing within the City of Burlington Police Department by adopting a procedure that defines the role of the Burlington Police Commission in reviewing complaints against agency members.

**Policy:**

1. When a complaint is received by the Burlington Police Department about the conduct of an employee of the Burlington Police Department, the Chief of Police shall cause that complaint to be investigated as soon as practical by an individual or individuals with no interest in or attachment to the issue or officer(s) being investigated. When a complaint is received by members of the Burlington Police Commission, the member of the Burlington Police Commission should encourage the person making the complaint to submit it via the Burlington City website or should personally take the complaint, attempting to capture all the information otherwise contained in the Citizen's Complaint Form. [See Appendix A]
  - a. All complaints, whether generated externally or internally, are referred to as Citizen's Complaints.
  - b. All Citizen's Complaints are documented on a spreadsheet maintained by the Deputy Chief of Administration, or designee.
  - c. Lower-level and some mid-level complaints that are able to be resolved quickly and at first level of supervision, remain as Citizen's Complaints.
  - d. Some mid-level complaints may be escalated to an Administrative Review (AR). An AR is designed to determine if a complaint needs to be elevated to a Bureau of Internal Affairs investigation or if it is able to be handled without a robust personnel investigation.
  - e. Higher-level complaints will either be an Administrative Review or will be escalated to a Bureau of Internal Affairs investigation.
  - f. Lower-level, mid-level, and higher-level complaints will be categorized consistent with the Burlington Police Officers' Association Contract, Article XV, section 15.2. [See Appendix B]
  
2. The Deputy Chief of Administration, or his/her designee, will maintain a written record of each complaint. That written record will at a minimum include:
  - The name(s) of the employee(s) involved.
  - The date of receipt of the allegation.
  - The date of the alleged incident, if known.
  - The type or nature of the allegation.

- The name(s) of the person(s) who investigated.
- The final disposition of each complaint.
- How the matter was closed out with the complainant.

In addition, if the complaint involves an allegation of excessive use of force, or an allegation of dishonesty or other serious misconduct, the written record will include:

- All action taken in response to the complaint.
  - Identification of all witnesses, documents, evidence, or other information obtained or consulted in the course of the investigation.
3. The written record of each complaint will be considered confidential. Each Commissioner shall have access to the written records of all complaints upon request to the Chief, subject to the Vermont Public Records Act, and the Burlington Police Officers' Association agreement. Further information may be available to the Commissioner receiving the records upon the completion of a fingerprint-supported background check and the execution of a confidentiality agreement.
  4. The Chief will report to the Police Commission on all complaints against members of the department as follows:
    - Updates about complaints against employees will be shared with the Commission in Executive Session at the first meeting following receipt of the complaint, unless the matter is of such urgency that a special meeting is required. Status updates on the progress of complaints under investigation will be provided to the Commission, as appropriate, and further detail and access to reports/video/etc shall be provided to the Police Commission in Executive Session at the first meeting after the investigation has been completed.
    - For lower- and mid-level complaints, the Chief will provide a verbal or written summary of the complaints and their status or disposition in Executive Session.
    - For higher-level complaints, such as those involving an allegation of excessive use of force, dishonesty, discrimination, harassment, or other serious misconduct; or for any lower- or mid-level complaint that results in discipline beyond a written reprimand; or for any other conduct for which suspension or termination is recommended, the Chief will provide the Police Commission with a full verbal briefing of the allegations and the recommended disposition of the case in executive session.
    - The Chief of Police, or his/her designee, will report to the Police Commission in Executive Session on a monthly basis regarding any Use-of-Force incidents. The update shall include demographic data about the officer(s) and subject(s) such as gender, age, and race, and also provide a description of incident.

- At the request of any member of the Police Commission, the Chief will make the written record available for Executive Session review by the Police Commission, as well as any audio or video footage, written materials, evidence, or other information related to the allegation.
  - The Chief of Police, in consultation with the States Attorney's Office, will make the determination of if a complaint needs to be referred outside the Department for investigation of possible criminal conduct. If the complaint has been referred outside of the Department for investigation of possible criminal conduct, the materials will be made available to the Police Commission in Executive Session once a determination has been made that the materials may be disclosed to the Police Commission without adversely affecting any possible prosecution.
5. After receipt of the report described above, the Police Commission may:
- accept the Chief's report and recommended action in full or in part;
  - request additional information;
  - request that the Chief reconsider the action and/or make a recommendation to the Chief about the investigation, process, disposition (including recommending a range of sanctions for the misconduct), or other aspect of the matter, or
  - postpone action to a later date, but no later than 14 days from the date of initial receipt of the report.
6. The Chief may accept or reject the Police Commission's recommendations. If the Chief rejects the Police Commission's recommendations, the Chief shall explain to the Police Commission why the recommendations were not accepted. If a majority of the Police Commission disagrees with the Chief's decision, the Police Commission Chair shall report this to the Mayor. Police Commission members should take care to avoid unauthorized disclosure of confidential information. To that end, any Commissioner may consult with the City Attorney's Office to obtain advice related to, among other things, the use and disclosure of confidential information.
7. The Chief of Police is responsible for reporting any misconduct of Burlington Police Department employees that falls under 20 VSA 2401 to the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council.
8. Whenever the Police Commission becomes aware of allegations of misconduct by the Chief of Police, or if the Police Commission has concerns about the performance of the Chief of Police, the Police Commission Chair shall report this to the Mayor in a timely manner. In the event that the Chief of Police has engaged in misconduct pursuant to 20 VSA 2401, the

Police Commission Chair shall report this to the Chair of the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council.

9. The Police Commission shall report to the Burlington City Council twice each year regarding this policy. The report shall include a redacted summary of the number, type, and disposition of complaints reported to the Police Commission.

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