

March 20, 2023

Statement of Grievances & Expectations of Community Engagement

To Spokane City Council Members and Mayor Woodward:

On behalf of the undersigned community groups, advocates, and individuals we denounce Spokane Chief of Police Craig Meidl's preferential treatment of certain community members, including Chud Wendle and his associates in the Spokane Business and Commercial Property Owners Council (SBCPOC). Our Chief of Police is using city resources to advance the agenda of a narrow group of powerful business owners, lending them more power than the average Spokaneite.

[The Ombudsman's report \(Report C21-070 / OPO 21-33\)](#) from December 2022, and the recent article in the Spokesman-Review titled, "[Shawn Vestal: Probe details extensive communications, favors between police chief and business group](#)", details events wherein the police chief uses his office unethically to provide direction and material support to those he considers his political allies, to the detriment of our community.

As stated in a report by the Office of Police Ombuds, "The Community Member's [Chud Wendle] relationship with members of SPD allows them to bypass the normal procedures the public utilizes to request police services. When people contact the Community Member's [Chud Wendle] associate, they do not call the police like the rest of the population." ([Report C21-070 / OPO 21-33](#) p.9)

We are still digesting the initial OPO report, subsequent news articles, and the first tranche of public records. The following are our initial grievances and demands.

Initial List of Community Grievances

1. Calls made by Chud Wendle and his associates receive a rapid response from the police, even as community groups and shelters report no response from police after multiple calls. Instead of serving the public impartially, Chief Meidl has weaponized accountability policies he dislikes to excuse a lack of police response to specific communities and reserved the highest level of public service for his friends.
2. Chief Meidl has inappropriately released information on active cases to Chud Wendle, contrary to public records conventions that require a case to be resolved in court before its records are available to the public. Chud Wendle uses the information obtained from the Spokane Police Department to unfairly target Spokane's vulnerable populations and advance his biased agenda.
3. The Spokane Police Department's relationship with Spokane City Council Members is predatory and coercive. ([Shawn Vestal: Spokane Police ride-alongs raise concerns when used as council endorsement tool.](#)) Furthermore, the Spokane Police Department feeds Chud Wendle information to be used as a political tool against public officials and

candidates he believes oppose his biased political agenda, thus acting as the external pressure within a larger campaign.

4. Ombudsman's efforts to investigate this and other matters are also shown to be obstructed further by the Spokane Police Department. ([Report C21-070 / OPO 21-33](#) p.6-7)

Community Demands

It is an injustice when our police force shows favoritism towards certain members of our community and indifference or brutality towards others. It is the responsibility of public safety officials, such as police, to remain impartial while doing their job. Chief Meidl of the Spokane Police Department has failed to uphold the impartiality expected of the position of Chief of Police. His favoritism towards Chud Wendle and associates has shown that he not only favors this group, but uses his position of power within the city to push this group's agenda forward.

1. We call for Chief Meidl's resignation in light of his conduct as the Chief of Police in Spokane.
2. We call on Mayor Woodward to begin an open search for a new Chief of police with meaningful and inclusive community involvement. We do not support a permanent internal promotion.
3. We call on Mayor Woodward to follow the 2016 [Police Leadership Advisory Committee's Recommendations](#) for hiring a new Spokane Chief of Police.
4. We call on all concerned public officials to follow the recommendations from the OPO ([Report C21-070 / OPO 21-33](#) p.26-34)
5. We call on Mayor Woodward to instruct the city attorney to negotiate a contract between the City and Spokane Police Department that allows the Police Ombuds to write reports with the full freedom to explain findings and make recommendations based on their investigation and expertise.
6. We call on the City Administration to conduct a regularly scheduled audit of public record requests that tracks processing time for requests.
7. We call on Spokane City Council to use its subpoena power to fully investigate the degree to which Chief Meidl and other members of the Spokane Police Department used positions or public resources to advance the political agenda of Chud Wendle and SBCPOC, and to what degree members of local government were unduly influenced by Chud Wendle, SBCPOC, and their associates.

This behavior fits a consistent pattern wherein Spokane city officials continually play politics to benefit a few, while refusing meaningful community engagement with the many. Examples include the [stonewalling](#) at the community [roundtables on police reform](#), the years-delayed and still non-existent hiring process for the Director of the Office of Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion, and the disingenuous engagement with the larger Spokane community while continuing to approve funding for a police department sorely in need of accountability.

In our community, certain elected and community leaders are under the scrutiny of our local police department, as seen in the ride-along vettings of potential City Council candidates.

Meanwhile, improperly leaked information from police investigations is being misused to attack City Council Members on national news networks and biased talk shows in order to further polarize our community and destroy public trust in City government. Officers have weaponized inaction and are using this “soft strike” to claim that any efforts to increase police accountability only lead to increased and unchecked crime. This toxic dynamic needs to be addressed with community oversight because public officials are afraid to enact meaningful public safety policies for fear of damaging this chaotic relationship further.

This fear has perpetuated a vicious cycle in which Council consistently supports the Spokane Police Department through funding, which then leaks information to Council’s political adversaries, which they use to apply pressure to Council on the demonstrably erroneous grounds that they do not support the Spokane Police Department. As expressed by Council President Breean Beggs, “What have we done? What law did we pass? There’s nothing. We’ve given them millions more in their budget every year. We’ve added officers. We’ve spent millions on vehicles. Whatever they’ve requested, we’ve basically given them.”

It is urgent that you, our elected officials, take action now to hold our Police Chief accountable for his actions by calling for his resignation, and implementing a reform agenda with strong community engagement. This will be a major step forward towards recovery and accountability so our government can function for the good of the many in Spokane. We ask that the Spokane City Council unite with the voice of the broader community, deliver the actions called for above, continue forward with the items listed in the [2020 Public Safety Reform Agenda](#), and to update & revise these items with continuous community input. Let’s take a step forward to recovery and accountability for how our government can function for the many of Spokane.

Signed,

Spokane Community Against Racism
NAACP Spokane
Peace and Justice Action League of
Spokane
Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund
Greater Spokane Progress
Veterans For Peace, Spokane Chapter
#35
Party for Socialism and Liberation
All of Us or None
Spectrum Center Spokane
UNYO
The Revive Center for Returning
Citizens
I Did The Time
APIC Spokane

Tenants Union of Washington State
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Inland Northwest Unitarian Universalist
Community
Dorothy Day Labor Forum
Muslims for Community, Action, and
Support (MCAS)
Disability Rights Washington
Jewels Helping Hands
MAC Movement
Peer Reentry Navigation Community
Bail Fund