

**2025-26 Sacramento County Grand Jury
SACRAMENTO COMMUNITY POLICE REVIEW COMMISSION:
WINDOW DRESSING OR PROGRESSING?
June 25, 2026**



Figure 1 Image generated by Grand Juror using ChatGPT (April 21, 2026), from the prompt "A portrait showing a window with open curtains and a box of recommendations."

SUMMARY

The Sacramento Community Police Review Commission (Commission) was established to provide community input to the Sacramento City Council (Council) regarding Sacramento Police Department (SPD) policies.

The Council created the Commission in 2016 as a way for the public to participate in the review of police policies, practices, and procedures and monitor the implementation, evaluation and sustainability of police initiatives and programs. The Commission was not given any oversight authority under its creation ordinances.

Over the years, the Commission has worked diligently to make recommendations to the Council regarding the SPD's policies and practices on matters such as use of force and use of military equipment. The Council is not required to review the Commission's recommendations nor does it have a timeline for processing them. Once a year, the Commission's Annual Report appears on the Council's Consent Calendar.

Meaningful community participation in policing policies, practices, and procedures builds trust and cooperation and promotes accountability. Effective civilian involvement in policing increases community confidence in law enforcement and makes Sacramento safer for residents and visitors subject to SPD practices.

The Grand Jury has found, however, that despite the Council's creation of this advisory body, the Commission largely functions as window dressing -- a symbolic body that lacks the resources and support necessary to bring about change.

The Commission provides recommendations to the SPD, which has no obligation to respond. No timeline exists within which the SPD must process the recommendations, nor must the City Council review them in a timely manner. Since its creation, the Commission has submitted 178 recommendations to the SPD. SPD has voluntarily implemented 10 of them, and the Council has voted to adopt one. The lack of a timeline and transparency in the review and reporting process nullifies the Commission's efforts to advise. Furthermore, the lack of resources, documentation requirements, mechanisms for tracking recommendations, mandatory responses from SPD or Council, and required Council action leaves the Commission's work largely in the dark. Rather than shine a light on policing, the Commission has further shrouded it in darkness.

The Grand Jury investigated whether the Commission's intended goals are being implemented and found that they are not. This report includes recommendations to improve the Commission's operations and functions.

BACKGROUND

Creation of the Commission

On July 11, 2016, SPD officers fatally shot a man experiencing a mental health crisis. During the incident, the officers fired 18 rounds, striking the man 14 times. The shooting drew significant public attention and became the catalyst for establishing civilian oversight of the SPD.

Following the incident, the then-Mayor created an ad hoc City Council committee to recommend a structure for civilian oversight. The mayor appointed the vice mayor and two additional council members to the committee. The ad hoc committee studied oversight models in other cities and prepared a proposal for the Council in which it recommended the Council create a Commission with the authority to review SPD policies, processes and procedures, and to investigate citizen complaints. It further recommended creating a position for a Commission officer, a budget analyst and an

independent investigator, as well as providing the Commission with a \$600,000 budget. The original proposal was never submitted.

On November 29, 2016, a substantially different proposal was presented to the Council at a public hearing. This version omitted all recommended funding and staffing. Members of the public opposed the revised proposal, arguing that the Commission would not have the tools to function effectively. The Council, nonetheless, voted unanimously to adopt the proposal as an ordinance, thus creating the current Commission. Each council member stated at the time that the Commission was a first step with further steps to follow.

The Commission consists of eleven members, ten of whom are appointed by elected officials and one who is recommended by the City of Sacramento Personnel & Public Employees Committee and must be between the ages of 16 and 22. There are no additional requirements for specified qualifications or for training of Commission members on oversight procedures, applicable law, and policing issues.

In the last decade, the Council has not adopted any further amendments to the Commission's founding ordinances.

Commission Performance Since Creation

Since its creation, criticism of the Council's failure to give the Commission the necessary tools to be effective has grown. Multiple Sacramento Bee articles and editorials have highlighted the Commission's inability to require the SPD and Council to hear and consider recommendations based on community input.

Additionally, a 2021 City of Sacramento internal audit identified deficiencies that hindered the Commission's effectiveness including unclear roles, insufficient resources, and inadequate follow-up on recommendations. The audit included recommendations to remedy those deficiencies, however, to date, the Council has failed to approve or implement any of the audit's recommendations.

The Commission has submitted 178 recommendations on topics including the use of military equipment, handling of citizen complaints, and internal SPD policies. The Council and the SPD have taken the following actions:

- SPD voluntarily implemented 10;
- The Council heard 7;
- The Council voted to adopt 1 in 2021 (regarding the SPD use-of-force policy).

Until mid-2024, SPD officers routinely attended Commission meetings. Due to the actions of the Commission chair, SPD declined to attend the Commission for the remainder of 2024. With a new Commission chair in 2025, the Commission-SPD relationship improved and SPD returned to attending Commission meetings.

In February 2025, the Mayor placed a proposed amendment to a Commission Ordinance on the Council consent calendar that would have allowed up to two former peace officers to serve on the Commission, but it was ultimately pulled from consideration.

All interviewees from SPD, the Commission (past and present), and the City Council confirmed that the Commission cannot function effectively. This is not surprising given the Council's lack of action on the Commission's recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The Grand Jury conducted personal interviews with:

- Past and present Sacramento Community Police Review Commission members
- Representatives of the Sacramento Police Department
- A Member of the Sacramento City Council

The Grand Jury reviewed the following documents:

- City Council November 29, 2016 meeting
https://sacramento.granicus.com/viewpublisher.php?view_id=22
- Sacramento City Code, Chapter 2.110 Commission establishing ordinances
codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/sacramentoca/latest/sacramento_ca/0-0-0-3148
- Sacramento City Government Organization Chart
- Portions of the Sacramento City Charter
- Council Rules of Procedure, Chapter 17
- Reports issued by the Commission
- Information regarding other law enforcement oversight bodies, including the City of Berkeley and the Sacramento County Sheriff's Office
- information regarding Sacramento City Office of Public Safety and Accountability
- Publicly available data regarding the SPD
- Commission recommendations to SPD and SPD responses

- Sacramento Office of the City Auditor, November 2021 Audit of the Commission
- Commission Work Plans for 2025 and 2026
- Commission meeting minutes and agenda
- Budget and staffing information for other Sacramento City Boards and Commissions
- Information regarding City of Sacramento Commission boards.cityofsacramento.org/board/2945. The Grand Jury also observed Commission public meetings via recording
- Media articles

DISCUSSION

The Commission Founding Ordinances

The Sacramento City Code states:

- 2.110.020 — Purposes of Commission. The commission is established for the following purposes: (A) Providing community participation in reviewing and recommending police department policies, practices, and procedures; and (B) Monitoring the implementation, evaluation, and sustainability of city policing initiatives and programs. (Ord. 2024-0038 § 1)
- 2.110.030 — Powers and Duties of Commission. The powers and duties of the commission are as follows: (A) To advise and make recommendations to the city council regarding police policy, procedures, and best practices, including those related to community relations, hiring, and training best practices. (B) To review quarterly reports prepared by the Office of Public Safety Accountability consistent with California Penal Code section 832.7(c), relating to the number, kind, and status of all citizen complaints filed against police department personnel, to determine whether there are patterns of misconduct that necessitate revisions to any police policy, practice, or procedure. (C) Annually, report to and make recommendations to the mayor and the city council regarding the activities of the commission and the Sacramento Police Department's efforts to strengthen bias-free policing and community-police relations. (Ord. 2024-0038 § 1)
- 2.110.040(B)(1)— Past and present peace officers are ineligible to be members of the Commission.

Absent from the Code are any provisions for funding, staffing and training for commissioners. In addition, the Code does not require SPD or the Council to respond to Commission recommendations.

The 2021 City Auditor's Report

After five years of Commission operation, the Sacramento Office of the City Auditor conducted a comprehensive audit of the Commission and issued findings in November 2021. The audit identified the following three issues as impediments to the Commission's effectiveness:

- The Commission lacks clearly defined roles and responsibilities, leading to confusion and frustration.
- The Commission requires resources and investment from the City to effectively achieve its objectives.
- The Commission needs a formal process to document its recommendations and track implementation of approved recommendations.

On November 18, 2021, Deputy Chief Kathy Lester submitted a response to the audit indicating that SPD concurred with multiple audit recommendations. On November 30, 2021, the City Council approved the audit. Five years after the audit, the Council has failed to adopt and implement any of the audit's recommendations.

Operational Infrastructure Deficiencies

The Commission has operated without basic infrastructure throughout its existence. The founding ordinances provided for none of the supports proposed by the original ad hoc committee. The Commission lacks the following:

- A public-facing website
- Commissioner email addresses
- Budgetary support from the City
- Dedicated public contact information (public contact defaults to the City Clerk's email and phone)
- Commissioner training on police practices, procedures, policies, or governing law
- Independent notice of Commission meetings or agenda (notice appears only within the City's general Boards and Commissions website)
- Any mention on the SPD Community Support website

The lack of the above impedes the community's ability to communicate with the Commission

Commission Authority vs. Practical Influence

City Code grants the Commission no oversight authority. The Commission may only review, advise, and make recommendations to the Council regarding the community's input on SPD policies, procedures, and practices. Neither SPD nor the Council has adopted a formal process for responding to, or acting on input from, the Commission. The Commission produces an annual report, work plan, and recommendations that, with few exceptions, are routinely placed on the Council's consent calendar and ignored.

Structural Failures

The Grand Jury identifies the following structural deficiencies as the primary drivers of the Commission's inability to carry out its mission:

- Commission recommendations lack required documentation standards, limiting SPDs' and the Council's ability to evaluate them.
- SPD is not required to provide written responses to recommendations and does not do so.
- The Council is not required to vote on recommendations; in fact, between 2018 and 2021, the Council labeled all 110 recommendations as "received and filed".
- No entity tracks progress or status of recommendations.
- The Commission receives insufficient funding for administrative resources and support.
- City Code imposes no training requirements for commissioners.
- The Commission maintains no public-facing digital presence or other ways to communicate with the public. There exists a single web page on the City of Sacramento's website.

A complete lack of funding, support staff, and Commissioner training hampers the Commission's ability to substantiate its recommendations. The lack of SPD or Council obligations to respond to recommendations, coupled with the Council's failure to act on the Commission's recommendations, ensures that the Commission has no meaningful input or impact on SPD policies, practices, and procedures. The Commission's inability to bring about change only reinforces the public's view that it has no voice in policing that affects their neighborhoods and lives.

Consequences of Inaction

The absence of formal processes has created a cycle in which the Commission submits recommendations to SPD, the Council receives them, and minimal responsive action is taken. Neither SPD nor the Council creates a public record of outcomes. This structure removes accountability from all parties and nullifies the Commission's work to provide community input on police policies, practices, and procedures. Based on the Council's failure to provide funding for sufficient outreach, Commission meetings rarely draw more than five members of the public.

FINDINGS

F1. The City Council and the SPD have not provided the Commission with the ability to have effective community participation, including a public-facing website, dedicated email or other digital presence that links to the Commission, thereby limiting public access to the Commission's work and reducing transparency (R1).

F2. The City Council's failure to provide the Commission with an effective process for considering its recommendations limits the ability of SPD, the Council, and the community to evaluate the Commission's recommendations (R2).

F3. The City Code does not require SPD to respond, formally or informally, to Commission recommendations, leaving a void regarding the status of the recommendation (R3).

F4. The City Council has no consistent process for documenting or publicly communicating the status of Commission recommendations once they are received, which effectively prevents the Council from participating in the process promised by the Commission's creation (R4, R5).

F5. With few exceptions, the City Council simply places Commission recommendations on its consent calendar, which diminishes the recommendations that reflect the community's involvement (R3).

F6. Neither the Commission nor SPD has a procedure to track the implementation of Commission recommendations, thereby preventing knowledge of their status (R5).

F7. The City's Code does not require Commissioners to receive training on oversight procedures, applicable law, and policing issues, undermining their ability to serve as an effective advisory body (R6).

F8. The City Council failed to act on the 2021 audit recommendations from the Sacramento City Office of the City Auditor to improve the Commission's effectiveness, thereby limiting the Commission's ability to carry out its mission (R7).

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The City Council and SPD should take steps to enhance community participation, including establishing a public-facing website and dedicated email address linked to the Commission, by December 31, 2026 (F1).

R2. The City Council should develop and implement procedures for considering Commission recommendations by December 31, 2026 (F2).

R3. The City Council should require SPD to provide formal written responses to all Commission recommendations and a timeline for those responses by December 31, 2026 (F3, F5).

R4. The City Council should acknowledge receipt of and the outcome of each Commission recommendation by December 31, 2026 (F3, F4).

R5. The City Council should establish a formal, public tracking system for the recommendations by December 31, 2026 (F4, F6).

R6. The City Council should require initial and ongoing relevant training for commissioners to assist them in their duties by December 31, 2026 (F7).

R7. The City Council should formally respond to all recommendations in the 2021 audit by the Sacramento City Office of the City Auditor by December 31, 2026 (F8).

REQUIRED RESPONSES

The following responses are required, pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05:

From the following elected body within 90 days:

Sacramento City Council — All findings and recommendations.

Sacramento City Council
Office of City Clerk
915 I Street, 5th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mail or deliver a hard copy response to:

The Honorable Lawrence G. Brown
500 G Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Email the response to:

TapiaE@saccourt.ca.gov
Erendira Tapia-Bouthillier
Sacramento County Grand Jury Coordinator

INVITED RESPONSES

Responses are invited from the following within 60 days:

- Chief of Police, Sacramento Police Department — All findings and recommendations.

Interim Chief Zachary Bales
5770 Freeport Blvd, Suite 100, Sacramento, CA 95822

- City Manager, City of Sacramento — All findings and recommendations.

Maraskeshia Smith - City Manager
915 I Street, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814

- Chair, Commission – All findings and recommendations.

Sacramento Community Police Review Commission
Office of City Clerk
915 I Street, 5th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814