



Commissioners

Linda Dozer (Chair)
Gary Hill (Vice Chair)
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City of Santa Barbara

**FIRE & POLICE COMMISSION
SANTA BARBARA CITY HALL,
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
735 ANACAPA STREET**

APRIL 25, 2024

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Fire and Police Commission Issues First Public Statement: “The Numbers Speak for Themselves” and Hearing More from Our Community is a Top Priority

The purpose of the Fire and Police Commission is to act in an advisory capacity to the City Council and the City Administrator in all matters relating to efficient and adequate fire and police protection for the City of Santa Barbara.

As the result of local advocacy for more transparency among law enforcement agencies, the Commission was reconstituted last year with five new members and newly assigned duties to provide the public with representatives that could ask questions, obtain answers, and build a collaborative and trusting relationship between the Santa Barbara Police Department and the community. The new Commission held its first meeting on January 25, 2023.

Over the last year, both the Police Department under Chief Kelly Gordon and the City Fire Department under Chief Chris Mailes have provided detailed briefings on the policies, procedures and operational aspects of their Departments. They have also responded to extensive questions from the Commission.

The Commission would like to state that the levels of effort, transparency and data reporting have been exemplary and have shown a serious commitment both to the Commission and to the goal of a collaborative and trusting relationship with the Santa Barbara community. In particular, we would like to commend the work of the new Police Chief, Kelly Gordon, and her executive team in their efforts to promote the wellbeing of both Police Department employees and the community at large through extensive community outreach and training in harm reduction and de-escalation techniques.

At the start of this year, the Commission received the completed Audit of the Santa Barbara Police Department from the OIR Group.¹ The auditor highlighted several areas of strength about Department leadership, community engagement as well as the extraordinarily limited number of Use of Force investigations. The OIR Group also highlighted the low number of complaints received by the Department.

This was further reinforced by the annual reports submitted to the Commission this year that showed a 37% reduction in incidents of force used which is a total of 93 incidents of 47,232 calls for service and down from 147 incidents the prior year. The Department also reported receiving only 26 complaints for the year of which eight were sustained. Moreover, of the 31 recommendations noted in the Audit Report, 25 of them have already been implemented which also demonstrates the Santa Barbara Police Department's commitment to continuous improvement.

At this time, the Commission would like to publicly recognize, commend, and appreciate the outstanding work done by the officers of the Santa Barbara Police Department. Chair Linda Dozer emphasized, "We believe the numbers speak for themselves."

Moving forward, one of the Commission's top priorities is directly engaging the residents of Santa Barbara in our work. The Commission is dedicated to strengthening the relationship between the community and the Santa Barbara Police Department and Fire Department by providing transparent oversight and increased civilian input regarding departmental policies, practices, and procedures.

"We want to meet with you in your neighborhoods, hear from you directly, and address issues that are important to you," shared Vice Chair Gary Hill.

The Commission is also focused on ensuring that the Police Department and Fire Department have the resources and personnel they need to ensure the highest levels of public safety including timely response to the complex situations that our community members are facing every day. We recognize the City is stepping into a budgeting process where the Mayor and Council will have a number of challenging decisions to address an over \$7 million deficit. The Commission believes that the Police Department and Fire Department deserve the highest priority in resource allocation, especially in retaining and recruiting employees that will continue to meet the exemplary levels of service and community policing.

More information on the City of Santa Barbara Fire and Police Commission is available at: <https://santabarbaraca.gov/fire-police-commission>.

All Commission meetings are streamed live and recordings are available here: <https://santabarbaraca.gov/fire-police-commission/fire-police-commission-videos>.

¹ OIR Group, an independent team of police practices experts, was the firm selected to conduct the Audit due to their more than two decades of experience in oversight. More information is available at: <https://www.oirgroup.com>.