

## Information Item

**Date:** October 14, 2019

**To:** Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore and Members of City Council

**From:** Al Andrews, Deputy City Attorney

**Subject:** Online Filing of Citizen Police Commendations and Complaints (Update)

**Strategic Focus Area:** Safe and Secure Community  
**Strategic Objective:** Improve Public Safety Service Quality  
**Strategic Plan Action Item:** No  
**Key Work Item:** No



At the September 9, 2019 Public Safety Committee meeting, staff presented information on the methods for citizens to submit police commendations and complaints online. The Committee Chair directed staff to develop and begin a pilot program for receiving and processing citizen police commendations and complaints. The Chair further directed that the commendation form should be listed first followed by the complaint form.

The online process is now ready to go live. In the nutshell, the process will work as follows:

A. Citizen commendations. (Available online).

The online portal has been created where a citizen may go to submit commendations of Winston-Salem police officers. Citizens may supply narrative information and attach documents, photos, audio and video such as that which is captured on a cell phone. There will be a file size limit of 250 MB. Citizen-submitted commendations will be reviewed and validated by the officer's chain of command and submitted to the Chief of Police. If approved, the officer will be recognized and receive a commendation.

B. Citizen complaints.

1. Informal complaints (Available online).

Historically, most of the complaints received are informal. A review process, similar to that outlined above for citizen commendations, will apply to informal complaints. Citizens can file an informal complaint form online. WSPD's Professional Standards Division ("PSD") will make contact with the citizen to review the information and confirm he/she wishes to proceed on an informal basis. If the citizen wishes to proceed with the complaint on an informal basis, the complaint will be referred to the officer's supervisor for review and a response in accordance with WSPD procedures. The citizen

will then be able to contact designated city staff to find out which supervisor is processing the complaint. If the citizen is not satisfied with the outcome, the citizen could proceed under the formal complaint process, upon compliance with the required steps.

2. Formal complaints (Standard process).

Due to accreditation standards, a formal complaint form, rather than an online form, will still need to be completed. Historically, the number of such complaints have been few in number and WSPD will continue to work with citizens in completing the hard copy complaint form for processing. The formal complaint process encompasses the Citizen Police Review Board process, which addresses complaints as to actions of the Winston-Salem Police Department, police officers and other police department employees. All formal complaints are investigated by PSD. If the citizen is not satisfied with Chief's disposition of the formal complaint, the citizen may appeal said complaint to the Citizen Police Review Board ("CPRB").

The online forms are designed to be user-friendly and intuitive. They are scaled for use on desktop and laptop computers, cell phones and other mobile devices. As requested by the Committee, staff will market the forms' availability to citizens. We will advise citizens of locations, such as city recreation centers and the Black Phillips Smith building, where they may obtain no-cost computer access in order to complete the forms. Citizens will be provided a means of contacting city staff for assistance in completing the forms.