

Board of Police Commissioners: 2024 Annual Report



Letter from the Chair of the Board of Police Commissioners:

I am writing to reflect on the significant progress made by the Board of Police Commissioners (BPC) during 2024. This progress is due to the dedication and hard work of the Springfield Police Department, led by Police Superintendent Larry Akers, as well as the support of Mayor Domenic Sarno and the City of Springfield administration. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all involved.

The members of the Board of Police Commissioners are: Albert Tranghese, Chairman; Robert (Cee) Jackson, Vice Chairman; Gary Berte; Madeline Fernandez; and Norman Roldan.

The BPC is critical to fostering accountability and transparency within the Springfield Police Department (SPD). The BPC Manual and the Internal Investigation Unit Manual provide essential guidelines for BPC operations, empowering the Board to effectively fulfill its responsibilities.

The BPC is committed to continuously improving its operations and fulfilling its role as an independent oversight body. Monthly training for BPC members, facilitated by the SPD Academy Staff, Law Department, Labor Relations Department, as well as external experts, has offered insights to the Board, helping them understand the legal and procedural requirements that SPD supervisors and officers are required to adhere to on a daily basis.

The BPC Members' commitment to serving the community and upholding the principles of accountability is commendable. The time and effort spent by the volunteer members each month is significant. In addition to holding monthly meetings, conducting disciplinary hearings, and attending monthly training sessions, some members of the BPC also serve on SPD Committees as required by the Department of Justice Settlement Agreement, including the Use of Force Committee.

In 2024 the BPC attended training sessions including the following topics: the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law; the SPD Disciplinary Matrix; Use of Force training delivered by the Mass. Police Training Council; Ethics and Conflict of Interest; POST Commission training; IIU Investigations, Complaint Process, Policy and Procedures; the BPC Manual; and Investigating Police Surveillance Technology (NACOLE Webinar).

As the BPC continues its mission, we remain committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders, including the community, the SPD, the Department of Justice, the Compliance Evaluator Team, and other relevant entities. We continue to believe that strong, transparent, and accountable policing is essential for building trust within our community, and we are dedicated to upholding these principles in all our endeavors.

In closing, I want to reiterate my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the BPC's progress. Together, we are building a stronger and more accountable future for the Springfield Police Department and the community we serve.

Sincerely,

Albert Tranghese

Albert Tranghese, Chair
Board of Police Commissioners

INTRODUCTION

2024 was a busy year for the Board of Police Commissioners, with meetings and disciplinary hearings on a monthly basis and sometimes more often. This report serves as a summary of the work of the BPC, offering a comprehensive overview of its activities throughout the year.

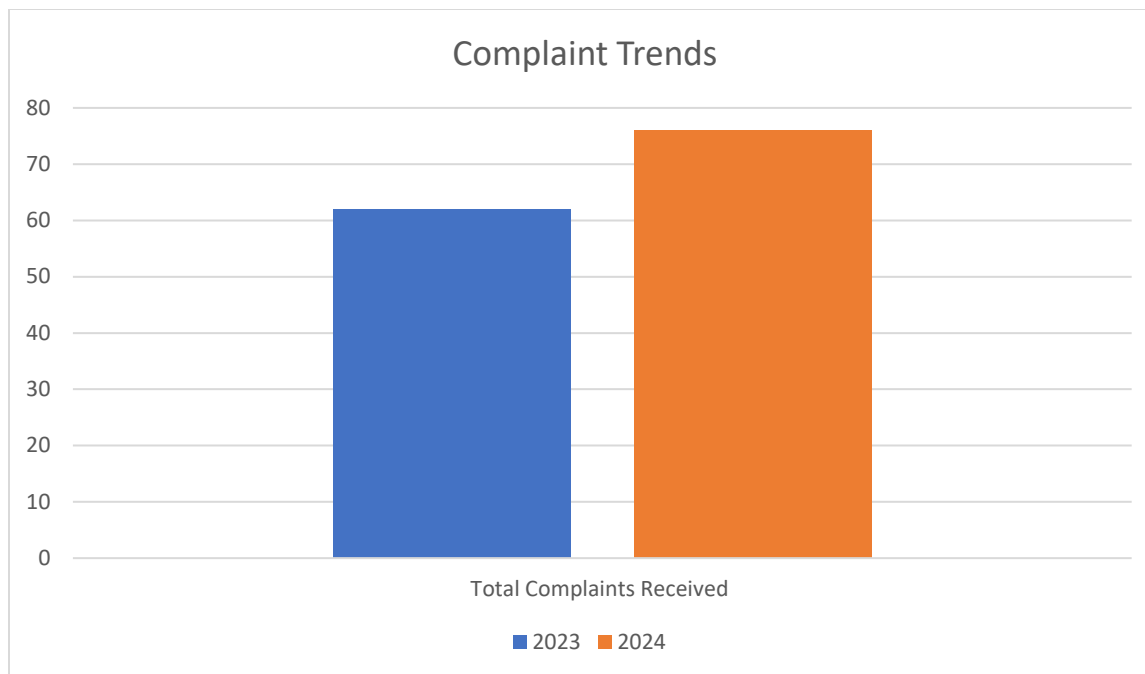
This report focuses on key areas of improving the public's access to filing complaints, reviews of complaint trends as shown on the SPD's website; the BPC's reviews of disciplinary investigations; disciplinary hearings held by the BPC; and the BPC's use of the SPD Disciplinary Matrix to guide its decisions on disciplinary outcomes based on specific standards.

When a citizen complaint is submitted in person, by email or letter, SPD staff (in Superintendent's Office, or IIU) send an acknowledgment of the complaint. Complaints are reviewed and categorized as either PIEs or SO's, and referred for investigation either by the officer's squad supervisor or the Internal Investigation Unit. The squad supervisors or IIU investigators contact complainants as needed to get information about the complaint, to ask them to appear for an interview, which may be in person or by phone. Once the investigation and any hearing is completed, the complainant is notified of the disposition of the case.

This report aims to not only inform the public of the BPC's work in 2024, but also to foster dialogue and understanding between the community and the SPD. We hope the progress made in 2024 will lead to continued improvement and collaboration in the years to come.

COMPLAINT TRENDS AND INVESTIGATIONS

In 2024, the SPD and the Internal Investigation Unit (IIU) received a total of 76 complaints, including Preliminary Investigations of Employees (PIEs), and Special Orders (SOs). This number reflects all complaints filed, not only those sent to the BPC for review. Forty-five (45) of these were citizen complaints originated from members of the public, and 31 were internal SPD administrative complaints brought by supervisors. From the complaints received and investigated by IIU, a total of 6 cases were sent to the Board of Police Commissioners for review.



Focus on Procedural Issues and Professional Conduct:

A significant portion of the 2024 complaints, 44 of the 76 complaints received, fell under the category of **Preliminary Investigations of Employees (PIE's)**. These investigations primarily addressed allegations of discourtesy and procedural violations, and Body Worn Camera footage was reviewed by the officer's supervisor for each complaint. While these may not involve the most serious categories of misconduct, they are essential for ensuring that officers uphold professional standards and treat the public with respect. Discipline imposed for PIE's is intended to be remedial in nature and include retraining and written reprimands. Addressing these issues promptly and effectively helps to build trust within the community. A spreadsheet listing the PIE's in 2024 is attached to this Report as Exhibit #1. (In Exhibit #1 the code "CC" refers to Citizen Complaints, and the code "Admin" refers to internal SPD administrative complaints brought by supervisors, and "R&R" refers to SPD Rules and Regulations.)

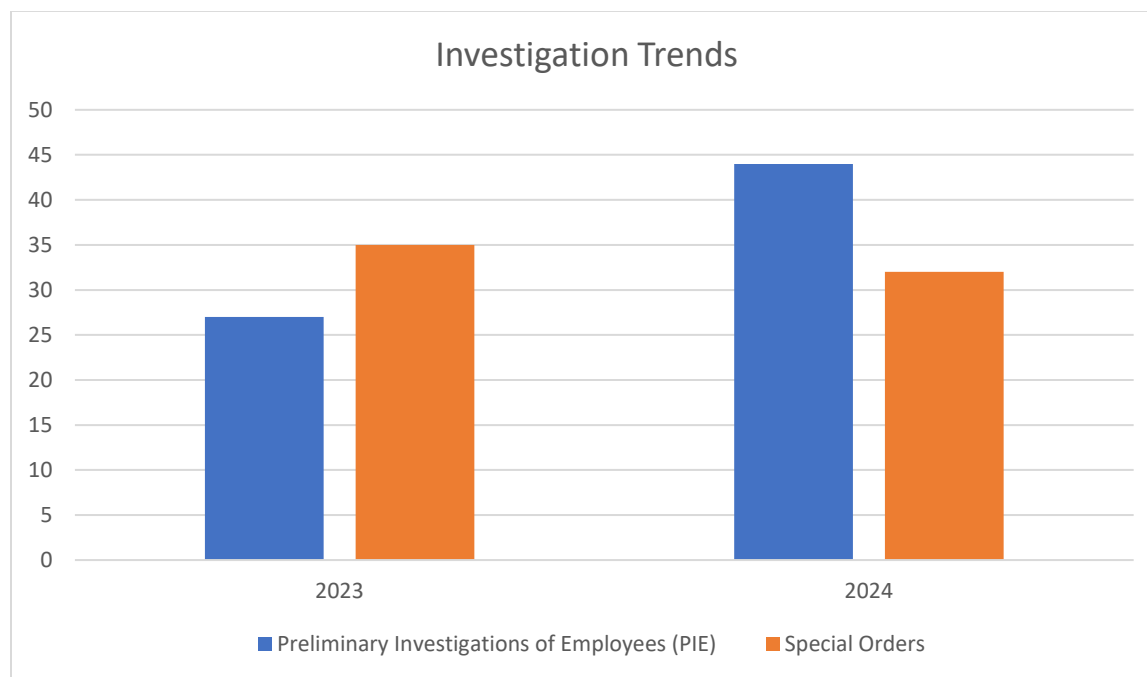
Investigating More Serious Allegations:

Citizen complaints and SPD administrative complaints involving potentially more serious misconduct, categorized as **Special Orders (SO's)**, are referred to the IIU to conduct more in-depth investigations. There were 32 cases involving SO's in 2024. A spreadsheet listing the SO's in 2024 is attached to this Report as Exhibit #2.

Some examples of complaints characterized as SO's may include: untruthfulness, the use of excessive force, corrupt acts, an alleged violation of a citizen's constitutional rights, a custodial death of a prisoner, an officer involved shooting, or a departmental vehicle pursuit that results in death or serious bodily injury. IIU investigations of SO's involve witness interviews, evidence gathering, and a more rigorous review process.

If the Superintendent, or the BPC after holding a disciplinary hearing, determines that a case involving an SO is "Sustained" by a preponderance of the evidence, and there is "just cause" for discipline, the resulting disciplinary action can range from retraining, suspension without pay, demotion, up to and

including termination, depending on the evidence presented, and a review of the applicable Disciplinary Matrix criteria.



Limited Cases Requiring Board Action:

It's important to note that of the 32 complaints categorized as Special Orders in 2024, only 6 reached the stage of requiring a hearing and potential disciplinary action by the BPC. The majority of the complaints were either unsubstantiated after an investigation, or addressed through corrective measures within the department.

Looking Forward:

The BPC recognizes the importance of analyzing complaint trends and using this information to improve departmental practices. By understanding the nature of complaints and the outcomes of investigations, the BPC can identify areas for improvement in training, policies, and procedures. This ongoing process is crucial for ensuring that the department operates with the highest level of professionalism and accountability.

Additional Considerations:

It's important to note that 2024 was the first full calendar year that the BPC reviewed complaints and trends. Analyzing complaint trends over several years will show whether complaints are increasing, decreasing, or remaining steady. The City will issue Annual Reports each year, allowing the SPD and BPC to analyze and understand the fluctuations in complaint trends moving forward.

- Multi-Year Analysis: In future reports, the Board can compare data from 2023 and 2024 with information from subsequent years to identify emerging trends and patterns.

- **Benchmarking:** The Board can benchmark its data against national averages or data from similar-sized jurisdictions. This provides a broader context for understanding how Springfield's complaint volume and outcomes compare to others.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Supplementing quantitative data with qualitative information from focus groups, surveys, and community meetings can offer valuable insights into residents' perceptions of police conduct and their experiences with the complaint process.

By reviewing these trends, the BPC can gain a more comprehensive understanding of long-term trends related to police complaints and investigations. This analysis will be important for informing future policies, training programs, and community outreach initiatives aimed at fostering trust and accountability.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

The following are the potential dispositions for disciplinary charges after hearings presented to the BPC:

1. **Sustained:** based upon a standard of the preponderance of the evidence, at least 3 members of the BPC find that the alleged misconduct did occur, and did violate the law or SPD policy;
2. **Not Sustained:** based upon a standard of the preponderance of the evidence, the BPC was unable to determine whether the alleged misconduct occurred.
3. **Exonerated:** based upon a standard of the preponderance of the evidence, the BPC determined that the alleged misconduct did occur, but did not violate the law or SPD policy.
4. **Unfounded:** The BPC determines, by clear and convincing evidence, that the alleged misconduct did not occur, or did not involve the subject employee.

Below are the data on disciplinary actions taken by the BPC in Calendar year 2024.

Data Analysis:

The data reflects the number of Preliminary Investigations of Employees (PIEs) and Special Orders (SOs) conducted by either the subject officer's commanding officer or SPD Internal Investigation Unit (IIU) in 2024. It's important to note that in some cases, this data represents investigations *initiated* and does *not reflect final outcomes or disciplinary actions taken by the Board of Police Commissioners*. (Lists of the PIE's and SO's received and reviewed in 2024 are attached as Exhibit #1 and Exhibit #2 to this Report.)

Here's a breakdown of the data for the year 2024:

Total PIE's - 44¹:

8 SPD administrative complaints by supervisors, 36 Citizen's Complaints
Sustained complaints: 12 (6 resulted in discipline)
Not Sustained complaints: 0
Unfounded complaints: 32

¹ Note: Not all PIEs and SO's result in disciplinary actions: Even if a complaint is sustained, the disciplinary action could range from retraining to termination, depending on the severity of the offense.

Exonerated complaints: 0
Pending complaints: 0

Total SO's - 32:

23 SPD administrative complaints by supervisors, 9 Citizen's Complaints
Sustained complaints: 12 (11 resulted in discipline, 1 resulted in letter of counseling)
Not Sustained complaints: 0
Unfounded complaints: 9
Exonerated: 1
Pending complaints: 10 (pending complete investigation by IIU, or BOPC hearing)

Out of all the complaints received in 2024, 6 of the SOs were referred for disciplinary hearings by the Board of Police Commissioners. One (1) disciplinary hearing resulted in a 75-day suspension without pay (SO# 24-006), and one disciplinary hearing resulted in a final disposition of "Unfounded" (SO#24-026). Four (4) of the 2024 SO cases are *pending* disciplinary hearings scheduled for 3/25/25 (SO# 24-015); 4/23/25 (SO# 24-021) , and 5/7/25 (SO# 24-024), and one hearing not yet scheduled (SO# 24-032). (Hearing dates are subject to change.)

It is important to note that the BPC does not directly initiate investigations. The IIU conducts investigations, and the BPC reviews the investigations sent to them for review, meets to decide whether to hold hearings on the investigations, then conducts hearings and imposes disciplinary action when necessary.

The BPC plays a vital role in ensuring accountability within the SPD by reviewing the IIU investigations sent to the BPC for review, deciding whether to conduct hearings on cases, holding disciplinary hearings, and imposing appropriate disciplinary actions when necessary. This process is outlined in the BPC Manual, on the SPD's website at: <https://springfieldmapolice.com/board-of-police-commission-bopc/>

The BPC's commitment to fairness and due process is paramount throughout the disciplinary process. This includes:

Thorough review of investigation reports: The BPC carefully examines all evidence and findings presented to them by the IIU investigators, and then votes whether or not to hold a hearing on disciplinary charges.

Opportunity for officer response: At a disciplinary hearing, the subject officer has the right to legal counsel, to respond to the allegations and present a defense, to cross examine witnesses, and to provide any mitigating evidence before the BPC makes a final decision on disciplinary charges.

Fair and consistent decision-making: The BPC strives to ensure that disciplinary actions are imposed consistently and fairly, considering the specific circumstances of each case, and after consulting with the SPD Disciplinary Matrix for guidance.

The BPC remains committed to upholding its role in reviewing complaints, ensuring thorough investigations, and imposing fair and consistent disciplinary actions when necessary.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Recognizing the importance of community trust and collaboration, the BPC held public comment periods at most of its public meetings, unless there was an Executive Session to discuss disciplinary matters or to

hold disciplinary hearing on the agenda. Community members spoke at the publicly held BPC meetings. These interactions helped identify areas for improvement in police accountability, and how to submit citizen's complaints, ultimately strengthening the relationship between residents and the police department.

Information about upcoming BPC meetings is located on the Springfield City Clerk's online calendar on the City of Springfield's public website, and on the BPC page of the City website which has links to BPC meeting information.

Springfield residents have multiple avenues to engage with the BPC, from attending formal meetings and public events, to filing complaints and contacting individual commissioners directly. The SPD website has information on how to contact the BPC members, including their SPD emails and cell phone numbers, and the dates when BPC meetings are scheduled.

Contacting commissioners: Residents can reach out to individual BPC members with questions or concerns:

Commissioner Albert Tranghese – 413-726-8614
Atranghese@springfieldpolice.net

Robert C. Jackson – 413-432-9641
RJackson@springfieldpolice.net

Commissioner Gary Berte – 413-351-5920
Gberte@springfieldpolice.net

Commissioner Madeline Fernandez – 413-432-9169
Mfernandez@springfieldpolice.net

Norman Roldan - 413-726-8159
nroldan@springfieldpolice.net

Attendance at the BPC Annual meeting is also a useful way for the public to understand how the BPC works, how to submit feedback, and how to submit citizen complaints and compliments. Also, when new policies are being drafted, the SPD website posts them online for public comment.

This open dialogue helps identify areas for improvement in police accountability and practices, ultimately strengthening the relationship between residents, the BPC, and the Springfield Police Department.

The SPD website also has information about community outreach and engagement with members of the SPD, including lists of meetings at various community events such as C-3 meetings, Beat Management meetings, and Neighborhood Council and Civic Association meetings, on its online calendar.

See links:

<https://springfieldmapolice.com/>

<https://springfieldmapolice.com/board-of-police-commission-bopc/>

<https://springfieldmapolice.com/community-calendar/?nocache=1>

<https://springfieldmapolice.com/data-dashboard/>

Filing complaints: Members of the public can file complaints about police misconduct through the IIU's online portal or in person. More information can be found at: <https://springfieldmapolice.com/internal-investigation-unit/>. Complaint forms and information about the citizen complaint process are also available at SPD headquarters at 130 Pearl Street, Springfield, MA., SPD substations, Springfield courts, Springfield libraries, and the Mayor's Office at 36 Court Street, 2nd Floor, Springfield, MA. 01103.

CONCLUSION

This report has highlighted the BPC's efforts in establishing clear operating procedures, reviewing complaints, and initiating dialogue with diverse community stakeholders. However, the Board recognizes that its work is ongoing and requires continued dedication.

Looking Forward:

In the coming year, the BPC remains committed to several key priorities:

Enhancing Transparency and Accountability: The BPC will continue to refine its complaint review process, ensuring thorough investigations and fair outcomes. Additionally, the BPC will strive to provide the public with clear and accessible information about its activities and decisions, while protecting the identities of the affected SPD employees, witnesses, and complainants.

Strengthening Community Collaboration: The BPC welcomes comments through public input sessions at its open meetings. Building trust through open communication and active listening is paramount to addressing community concerns and improving police-community relations.

Promoting Continuous Improvement: The BPC recognizes the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation. By analyzing data, soliciting feedback from stakeholders, and embracing best practices, the Board will continuously strive to enhance its effectiveness and ensure the SPD serves the community with the highest standards of professionalism and fairness.

Oversight and Improvement Report: The BPC and the Police Superintendent, after consulting with the Compliance Evaluator, will draft an oversight and improvement report and present it to the City. The report will assess and make recommendations on: whether there are impediments to SPD's civilian complaint processes that inhibit the ability for the Springfield community to obtain accountability for misconduct; whether changes should be made to the administration or functions of the BPC to improve its efficacy in investigations, resources, and coordination with and independence from SPD; how existing civilian-police communication and accountability structures can be improved, or whether additional/different civilian or community oversight entities are necessary to provide guidance on community perspectives on SPD policies and practices and its civilian complaint processes; the BPC's communications with the community, and whether the community has sufficient access to information about the BPC's organization, complaint investigations activities, and discipline recommendation processes; and the BPC's communications with complainants to ensure they are apprised of the status of their individual complaints. This report will be posted publicly on the City's website. Within 3 months of the issuance of the final report, the Mayor will determine which of the BPC's recommendations to adopt with a public explanation for adopting or not adopting each recommendation.

The BPC acknowledges that building trust takes time and consistent effort. However, the Board is confident that through transparency, accountability, and a commitment to open dialogue, a stronger and more equitable relationship between the police department and the community can be achieved. This

collaborative approach is essential for ensuring the safety and well-being of all Springfield residents and the community at large.

The BPC welcomes your continued feedback and engagement as we move forward together in building a safer and more just Springfield.