



# BOARD OF FIRE AND POLICE COMMISSIONERS

*Prepared by:  
Legislative Reference Bureau*

# History of the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners

1885 – Created by State law

1911 – Size and authority of Board expanded

1969 – Definition of “complainant” expanded

# History of the Board – continued

1977 – Suspension of rules, policy review authorized

1984 – Scope of authority expanded

1993 – Board of Fire and Police Commissioners added to  
the Code of Ordinances

# History of the Board – continued

2006 – City-commissioned consultant study completed

2007 – Position of Executive Director created and ordinance broadened

2008 – Board size increased and training requirement for new commissioners established

# State Law: s. 62.50, Wisconsin Statutes

- Applies only to Milwaukee
- Board consists of 7 or 9 members, with 5-year terms
- Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by Common Council
- Enrollment in training course required

# State Law - continued

Mandatory functions and duties of the Board:

- Recruit, test and hire personnel and appoint chiefs
- Receive and investigate citizen complaints
- Hear disciplinary appeals by department members
- Review department policies and rules

# State Law - continued

The Board also has discretionary authority to review the efficiency and good conduct of the departments, and may issue a written directive to a chief based on its review of the chief's department.

# City Code: Ch. 314, Code of Ordinances

Provides requirements for new commissioners:

- Background investigation for potential members
- Training for newly-appointed members



# City Code - continued

Further defines duties of the Board:

- Review policy for all aspects of the departments
- Audit internal investigations
- Monitor the citizen complaint process
- Identify problems and opportunities for improvement

# City Code - continued

Defines duties of the Executive Director:

- Review investigations
- Evaluate policies, practices, patterns
- Produce periodic public reports

# Police Oversight in Other Communities

Other Wisconsin cities:

- Required to establish a fire and police commission
- Board appoints, suspends and removes chiefs
- Given limited rulemaking authority
- Hears disciplinary appeals

# Other Communities - continued

Wisconsin villages:

- Creation of fire and police commission optional
- Board has same authority as other cities

# Other Communities - continued

Other large U.S. cities:

- Reviewed other cities, including Philadelphia, Detroit, San Antonio and Los Angeles
- None do all 4 major activities of Milwaukee board
  - Hire/fire chief
  - Rulemaking/directives to chief
  - Disciplinary appeals
  - Citizen complaints

# Current Board

- 5 of 7 positions filled
- Overlapping 5-year terms
- Board members paid \$6,600 per year

# Current Board - continued

Three standing committees:

- Committee on Complaints and Disciplines
- Committee on Policies and Standards
- Committee on Testing and Recruiting

# Current Board - continued

## Meetings:

- Regular meetings with department chiefs
- Standing committee meetings
- Disciplinary appeal/citizen complaint hearings



# Current Board Members

- Richard Cox
  - term expires July 2013
- Kathryn Hein
  - term expires July 2013
- Paoi Lor
  - term expires July 2013
- Sarah Morgan
  - term expires July 2015
- Michael O’Hear
  - term expires July 2016

# Board Staff

- Executive Director; Michael Tobin
- 11 other full-time positions
  - Major activities: testing, monitoring and research
- \$1.2 million budget for 2013

# Board Staff - continued

## Other Activities:

- Implementation of a mediation program
- Perform community relations
- Promote diversity within the departments

# 2006 Consultant Study

“Promoting Police Accountability in Milwaukee:  
Strengthening the Fire and Police Commission”

- Study performed by the Police Assessment Resource Center (Los Angeles)
- Report delivered in June 2006

# 2006 Consultant Study – Findings:

- Broken complaint process
- Underutilized policy review powers
- Personnel functions consuming too much time
- Insufficient community interaction

# 2006 Consultant Study – Findings:

(continued)

- Too intertwined with Department of Employee Relations
- Long delays in disciplinary appeals
- Inappropriate continuance of officer pay during appeals

# 2006 Study – Major Recommendations:

- Create an “independent monitor” function
- Bolster policy and research staff
- Move filing of citizen complaints to the department
- Establish independence from Department of Employee Relations

# 2006 Study – Major Recommendations:

(continued)

- Assign personnel functions to other City departments
- Increase community outreach
- Include public comments at all Board meetings



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**Thank You**

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