

From: Kathleen.OToole@seattle.gov

Date: June 26, 2017 at 10:47:33 PM PDT

To: Kshama Sawant <Kshama.Sawant@seattle.gov>

Cc: Edward Murray <Ed.Murray@seattle.gov>, Lorena.Gonzalez@seattle.gov,
council@seattle.gov, Merrick Bobb <merrickbobb@parc.info>, Annette.Hayes@usdoj.gov

Subject: Response

Councilmember Sawant,

I write in short response to your earlier email, which reflects a disappointing level of ignorance of SPD policies and clear disdain for the investigatory process and review that SPD is court-mandated to follow. Facts matter and pre-judgment of this incident by any of us would be completely irresponsible.

Since this tragic incident, members of my team and I have spent countless hours, each day, from early morning until late night, engaging with Charleena Lyles' family, her neighbors, clergy, and other community members. Out of courtesy and respect for her family, we have done so quietly and privately. I have promised her family and their pastor that we will continue to be open, transparent, and available. As we are barely over a week into an investigation that typically takes upwards of 90 days, I see absolutely no benefit to airing those private, difficult, and heartfelt conversations in a public, or worse, political forum.

To be clear, I and my team are always available to participate in honest, constructive dialogue. If you had expressed any interest in our work over the past three years, as SPD was striving to develop the policies, training, and systems for critical review that have become a model for agencies around the nation, we would have gladly welcomed the invitation to engage.

I personally promise that SPD will honor our commitment to the family and community to provide transparency into this investigation and comprehensive review. I will not, however, join in any process that threatens to exploit this terrible tragedy for another's personal or political gain.

Sincerely,

Kathleen O'Toole

Dear Councilmember González;

CC: Chief O'Toole, Mayor Murray, and Councilmembers;

Thank you for agreeing to hold a public hearing on the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) killing of Charleena Lyles. It is clear that ordinary people are concerned about the serious lack of accountability by the police.

As we discussed at the council briefing this morning, the nature and goals of the public hearing are crucial.

Charleena's family and other community members have many questions for SPD, especially around their use-of-force policies and trainings. In my view, if the City Council is serious about ensuring justice for Charleena and her family, it is necessary for Chief O'Toole to be publicly available to answer those questions. She should be at the table, alongside the NAACP and other activist organizations, to have a real discussion about what must change within SPD.

The officers who killed Charleena Lyles report to Chief O'Toole, as the head of SPD, which is also the department that oversees the Force Investigation Team. The Director of the Office of Professional Accountability also submits reports to her. If Chief O'Toole is not available to answer questions tomorrow, it will reiterate to the community that a business-as-usual investigation will not result in justice for Charleena any more than it did for Philando Castille in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Nationwide, of 1,155 people killed by police in 2016, only 13 officers were charged and none were convicted. Charleena's death is not an isolated tragic occurrence. In addition to ensuring a direct conversation between the community and Chief O'Toole, we also need the City Council to convene an independent, community-based investigation into Charleena's killing, a demand over 1,200 people have [signed on to](#). Going forward, we need democratically elected community oversight boards with full powers to hold police departments accountable.

I once again urge you to require Chief O'Toole to be present at the public hearing tomorrow, so the community can directly question her about this tragedy, SPD's internal investigation into it, and concerns about systematic racial and anti-poor biases in the police department.

Sincerely,
Councilmember Kshama Sawant



Councilmember Kshama Sawant
Seattle City Council – Legislative
Department

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