

# NACOLE Case Studies on Civilian Oversight

## Police Review and Advisory Board

Cambridge, Massachusetts  
Review-Focused Model

by Michael Vitoroulis



**COPS**  
Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice







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# Program Context

The Police Review and Advisory Board (PRAB) is a civilian-staffed agency with a board of five residents that provides oversight of the Cambridge Police Department (CPD). Created by city ordinance in 1984, the PRAB is authorized to receive, investigate, and mediate complaints and to review complaint investigations completed by the CPD's Professional Standards Unit (PSU). Following its review, it then issues recommendations on investigative findings, discipline, and departmental policies and procedures. With relatively tranquil relations between its 278 sworn officers and 113,000 residents, Cambridge is a collaborative and relationship-based environment for civilian oversight with a cooperative and receptive department.

# History and Evolution of the Police Review and Advisory Board

Public attention on police conduct in Cambridge gained traction in the 1970s amidst student-led political activism and strong opposition to the Vietnam War. Reports of heavy-handed policing at antiwar protests<sup>1</sup> and the publication at around the same time of a report on police-community relations commissioned by the city manager<sup>2</sup> contributed to community calls for the creation of a citizens' review board "to handle complaints and recommendations for improved service."<sup>3</sup> While such a proposal was briefly entertained by Cambridge's city manager in 1971,<sup>4</sup> it ultimately did not lead to the establishment of civilian oversight of the CPD.

Several police misconduct incidents in the years that followed would reignite community calls for greater CPD accountability. The in-custody death of 17-year-old Lawrence Largey in October 1972 sparked riots in an East Cambridge public housing development and further exacerbated the CPD's tense relations with minority communities.<sup>5</sup> However, community conversations around civilian oversight remained largely dormant until a controversial arrest in 1984 involving several African-American youths brought calls for oversight of the CPD to the forefront.<sup>6,7</sup>

That same year, following nine months of negotiations with and opposition by the CPD—during which the department asserted that civilian oversight would "create a disastrous impact on police officers' morale"—the Cambridge City Council approved an ordinance creating the

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1. Garrett Epps and The Crimson Staff, "Rioting Devastates Harvard Square; Windows Smashed, Scores Injured," *The Harvard Crimson*, April 16, 1970, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1970/4/16/rioting-devastates-harvard-square-windows-smashed/?page=2>.

2. *A Program in Police/Community Relations for the City of Cambridge*, (Cambridge, MA: Arthur D. Little, Inc., 1970).

3. J.H.H., "Police Brutality Review Board Begins, Faces Community Charges of Tokenism," *The Harvard Crimson*, February 16, 1970, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1971/2/16/police-brutality-review-board-begins-faces/>.

4. J.H.H., "Police Brutality Review Board Begins" (see note 3).

5. Nicole B. Usher, "Timeline: 1972-1976," *The Harvard Crimson*, June 5, 2001, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2001/6/5/timeline-1972-1976-pseptember-1-1972-assistant/?page=single>.

6. Luix Overbea, "Brutality Cases Renew Citizen Interest in Policing the Police," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 8, 1985, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1985/0708/areview.html>.

7. Thomas J. Winslow, 1985, "Review Board OK'd for Cambridge Police Force," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 22, 1985, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1985/5/22/review-board-okd-for-cambridge-police/>.



Police Review and Advisory Board (PRAB) by a 5–4 vote. The ordinance authorized a five-member panel of civilians appointed by the city manager to investigate complaints involving CPD officers; review complaint investigations completed by the department’s Professional Standards Unit; recommend investigatory findings, discipline, and new or revised departmental policies; review the department’s annual budget; and issue subpoenas.<sup>8</sup> The board convened for the first time in 1987<sup>9</sup> with an annual budget of \$66,240.<sup>10</sup>

In 1988, the bargaining units representing CPD officers—the Cambridge Police Patrol Officers Association and Cambridge Police Superior Officers Association—threatened to file grievances against the city alleging that the board’s right to question sworn officers was illegal.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, neither union filed a grievance or lawsuit against the city concerning the board’s ability to interrogate officers, and despite the initial opposition, the PRAB’s scope of authority was left unchanged. In the decade that followed, the PRAB operated with a very small caseload and relatively peaceful police-community relations throughout the city.

By the early 2000s, however, PRAB vacancies left unfilled by the city manager resulted in the PRAB not meeting for two years.<sup>12</sup> This prompted an ordinance amendment in 2003 that removed the five districts created by the original ordinance for appointing members.<sup>13</sup> That same year, the PRAB’s executive secretary (ES), who had previously filed and lost a racial discrimination claim against the city, was terminated by the city manager for cause, which led to a lawsuit against the city for retaliation that was ultimately decided against the city many years later.<sup>14</sup> Shortly thereafter, the executive director of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission

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8. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.

9. Martha A. Bridgegam, “Police Review Board Ready After 2 Years,” *The Harvard Crimson*, February 6, 1987, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1987/2/6/police-review-board-ready-after-2/>.

10. Bridgegam, “Police Review Board Ready” (see note 9).

11. “Police to File Grievance Over Review Board Action,” *The Harvard Crimson*, October 18, 1988. <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1988/10/18/police-to-file-grievance-over-review/>.

12. “Cambridge City Council meeting – May 24, 2004,” *Cambridge Civic Journal*, accessed May 29, 2018, <http://www.rwinters.com/council/052404.htm>.

13. City of Cambridge Ordinance 1268, Amended 9/29/2003. The original ordinance required that each of the five board positions be appointed from five geographical sections of Cambridge created by the ordinance.

14. *Malvina Monteiro v. City of Cambridge*, 80 Mass. App. Ct. 1103 (2011). No. 10-P-1240.

(HRC) was appointed as the interim PRAB executive secretary, serving both roles simultaneously. However, this appointment violated a provision in the original PRAB ordinance which stipulated that “staff shall not hold any other position for the city while he or she is a member of said Board or Staff.”<sup>15</sup> It also set a precedent for funding PRAB’s executive secretary position on a part-time basis and sharing the leadership role with other city agencies.

In January 2004, the interim executive secretary was asked to solicit recommendations for additional revisions to the PRAB ordinance in order to increase the effectiveness of PRAB and its work. Among those solicited were current and former PRAB members, the police commissioner, the Deputy Superintendent of the Professional Standards Unit, the CPD’s general counsel, and an attorney from the city’s Law Department.

By early May 2004, several community members filed a lawsuit against the city alleging that the city manager’s failure to appoint new members and “de facto abolition of the executive secretary position,” through reducing it to a part-time role shared with another city agency, violated his duties to “faithfully execute the laws of the City.”<sup>16</sup> Within a few weeks, the city manager had filled all remaining board vacancies.<sup>17</sup> The remaining claims were stayed for nearly a year because PRAB ordinance provisions relevant to the filing were in the process of being amended.<sup>18</sup>

In October 2004, the city manager submitted a series of proposed PRAB ordinance amendments to the Cambridge City Council. The proposed amendments, in addition to eliminating the provision that PRAB staff cannot be employed by another city agency, would have made the executive secretary and PRAB staff appointees of the city manager rather than the board; eliminated the board’s authority to investigate complaints and recommend policy; and removed the

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15. Cambridge City Code Chapter 15, Article IV, Section 2.

16. *Adkins v. Healy*, No. 041890 (Ma. Super. May 11, 2005).

17. *Adkins v. Healy* (see note 16).

18. *Adkins v. Healy* (see note 16).

PRAB's power to issue subpoenas.<sup>19</sup> A City Council Ordinance Committee report from November 2004 revealed public concern that the proposed changes would undermine the independence of the board.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, only the provision concerning PRAB staff employment with other city agencies was included—sections in the ordinance pertaining to the board's authority and independence were left unchanged. The interim executive secretary remained in his dual position up until 2009. The two subsequent individuals serving as executive secretary for the PRAB have been the executive directors of the city's Human Rights Commission or Peace Commission. All subsequent PRAB staff—including administrative support staff and an individual responsible for both investigative work and outreach—were also positions shared with either the Human Rights Commission or Peace Commission.

In September 2009, the arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., brought national attention to Cambridge police-community relations and represented another challenge for the PRAB. The incident, in which a CPD officer arrested the professor outside his house for disorderly conduct following a call for service from a neighbor concerning a potential break-in at Professor Gates's residence, prompted the city manager to create a 12-person review committee of Cambridge residents, academics, and policing experts to identify lessons to be learned from the incident. The PRAB did not receive a complaint from Gates, nor was it included in the review committee responsible for assessing the incident. The PRAB received complaints from uninvolved civil liberties activists, prompting its own review of the incident, and released a report containing recommendations based on the department's investigation into the incident.<sup>21</sup>

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19. Robert W. Healy, city manager, letter to Cambridge City Council, October 18, 2004.

20. Cambridge City Council Ordinance Committee Report, November 18, 2004, [https://www2.cambridgema.gov/cityClerk/CommitteeReport.cfm?instance\\_id=184](https://www2.cambridgema.gov/cityClerk/CommitteeReport.cfm?instance_id=184).

21. Marc Levy, "Gates Report, Officials Behind it Take Heat at Hearing," *Cambridge Day*, October 4, 2010.

# Organizational Structure

Cambridge is governed by a council-manager form of government, where city council members are elected at large by a form of proportional representation and the city council elects a mayor, who chairs the city council, and a vice mayor. The chief executive, the city manager, is responsible for general administration and policy implementation and is appointed by the city council. The PRAB reports quarterly to Cambridge's city manager, mayor, and city council.<sup>22</sup> In practice and in conformance with state law, the board's executive secretary reports directly to the city manager, as do all department heads.

## **Board composition, appointment, and training**

The five-member PRAB is composed of Cambridge residents appointed by the city manager for five-year terms.<sup>23</sup> Board members may not serve for more than two consecutive terms.<sup>24</sup> Members may be removed by the city manager for cause. If a member moves outside of the city of Cambridge, they may remain on the board until another resident is appointed by the city manager.

Immediate family of city employees may not be appointed to or hired by the board.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, board members or their immediate family may not have been employed by the city within two years of their appointment.<sup>26</sup> There is no prohibition of former law enforcement serving on the board.

All board members participate in a training program developed in consultation with the CPD. Past trainings, which largely take place at the CPD Academy/Training Unit, have included use of force, firearms simulator training using "shoot/don't shoot" scenarios, legitimacy and procedural justice, arrest and search and seizure, trauma-informed policing, ethics and conflict of interest, and the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. Board members also participate in ride-alongs and walk-alongs with CPD officers.

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22. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.040(E).

23. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(A).

24. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(A).

25. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(C).

26. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(D).



## Board staff

PRAB ordinance adopted by the city council specifies that the board appoints the ES to carry out the daily operations of the board<sup>27</sup> and an investigator to conduct the board's investigations.<sup>28</sup> It also specifies that all PRAB staff work under the direction of the board<sup>29</sup> and that the board is permitted to set the terms of employment for all staff. The ordinance also mandates that the PRAB review the CPD's budget before it is submitted to the city manager. However, these provisions are in direct violation of the state law that established the City of Cambridge under the Massachusetts Plan E form of government. Therefore, the ordinance has provisions that are not only unenforceable but also in contradiction with the established system of government.<sup>30</sup> In reality, the city manager, along with department heads, develops the city's annual budget and proposes it to the city council; appoints all board and commission members; hires all city staff; and sets all employment terms and staff salaries.

As of November 2017 (the time of NACOLE's site visit), the PRAB was staffed by two individuals: (1) an ES and (2) an office manager/project coordinator. The ES splits their time serving simultaneously as the executive director of the Cambridge Peace Commission. The office manager/project coordinator works for four city agencies in total: (1) the PRAB, (2) the Human Rights Commission, (3) the Peace Commission, and (4) the Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship. Past ESs have typically been attorneys or individuals recruited from within the City of Cambridge without a formal search process established to find candidates with direct experience in civilian oversight of law enforcement.

Because of the belief that it was not feasible to hire a full-time investigator owing to the low number of complaints received in Cambridge (see table 1 on page 14), in 2004 PRAB entered into an agreement with the CPD through which the department's PSU would be responsible for

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27. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.030(A).

28. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.030(B)(1).

29. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.030(D).

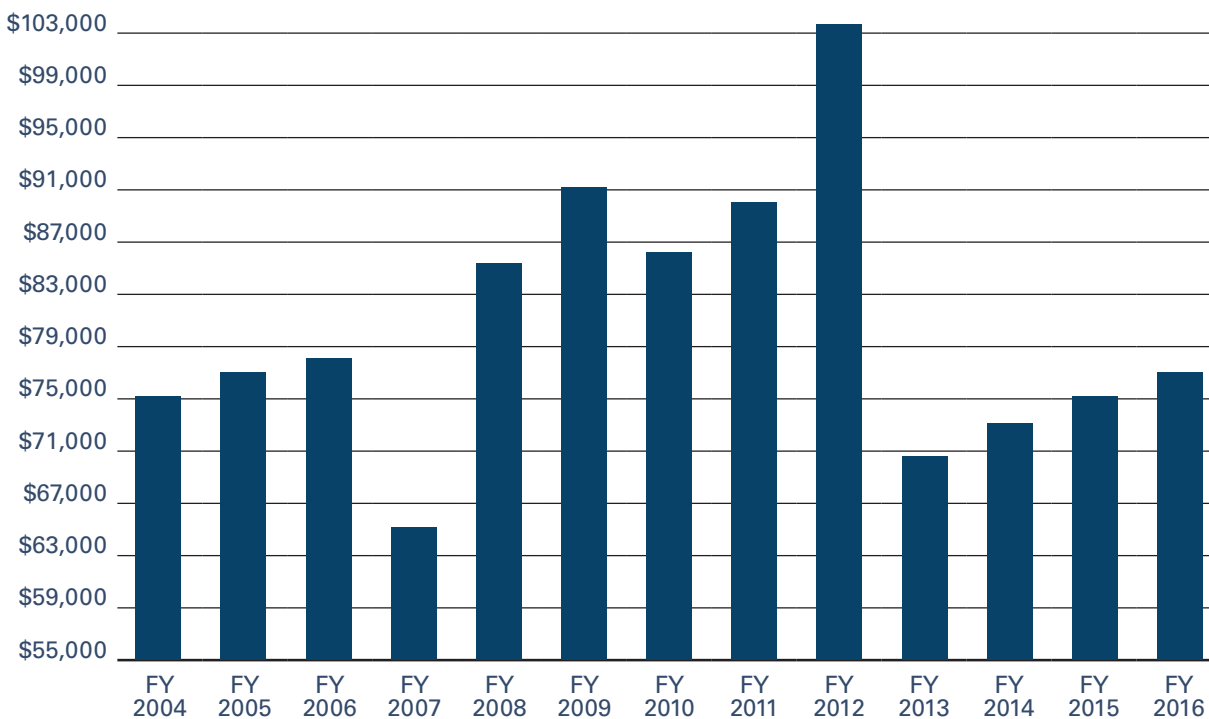
30. All Massachusetts cities other than Boston must adopt a plan of government as outlined in Chapter 43 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Plan E, as outlined in Chapter 43, Section 1 of the General Laws, is a "city government and legislative body, to be known as the city council, composed of seven or nine members, one of whom shall be elected as mayor by and from such members and shall be the official head of the city, and an administrative officer, called the city manager; the members of the city council and the elective members of the school committee to be elected at large by proportional representation." The city manager, under this plan, is responsible for the budget.

investigating complaints on behalf of the board.<sup>31</sup> Until 2010, a grant-funded investigative/ outreach liaison was employed by the office to conduct community outreach and review PSU investigations. The board has not had a dedicated investigator since.

## Budget

Figure 1 depicts the total amount of funds allocated to PRAB from fiscal years (FY) 2004 through 2016. Throughout those years, the PRAB’s annual budget averaged just under \$81,000. In 2017, because PRAB staff are shared with other city agencies, administrative funding for PRAB was transferred to the Cambridge Peace and Human Rights Commissions. In FY 2017, the Peace and Human Rights Commissions were allocated \$154,690 and \$257,270, respectively.<sup>32</sup> This transfer merely consolidated the budget line items for the various commissions and did not constitute a significant increase in resources allocated to PRAB.

**Figure 1. Police Review and Advisory Board annual budget**



Source: “Publications: Adopted Budget,” City of Cambridge, accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.cambridgema.gov/publications?page=1&ResultsPerPage=20&sortBy=releasedate&sortOrder=desc&category=Adopted%20Budget>.

31. Quoc M. Tran, Executive Director of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission, letter to Lieutenant Christopher J. Burke, January 8, 2004.

32. City of Cambridge Adopted Budget, FY 2017, <https://www.cambridgema.gov/~ /media/Files/budgetdepartment/FinancePDFs/FY17-Adopted-Budget.pdf>.

# Scope of Authority

The PRAB ordinance endows it with the following duties:<sup>33</sup>

- Provide for citizen participation in reviewing police department policies, practices, and procedures.
- Provide a prompt, impartial, and fair investigation of complaints brought by individuals against members of the Cambridge Police Department.
- Develop programs and strategies to promote positive police-community relations and to provide opportunities for expanded discussions, improved understanding, and innovative ways of resolving differences.

The PRAB is authorized to conduct independent complaint investigations; review completed CPD Professional Standards Unit investigations;<sup>34</sup> issue disciplinary recommendations on sustained cases;<sup>35</sup> mediate complaints; submit policy recommendations to the Police Commissioner;<sup>36</sup> review the police department's budget prior to submission to the city manager;<sup>37</sup> and issue quarterly reports to the city manager, the mayor, the city council, and the public.<sup>38</sup>

In practice, the PRAB focuses primarily on reviewing complaint investigations completed by the CPD's PSU on behalf of the PRAB, as well as mediation, developing policy recommendations for presentation to the Police Commissioner, and conducting community outreach.

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33. City of Cambridge, "Police Review & Advisory Board," accessed May 29, 2018, <https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/policereviewandadvisoryboard>.

34. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(C).

35. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(D).

36. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(A).

37. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(B).

38. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.020(E).

## Complaint investigation, review, and mediation

The PRAB may receive complaints from members of the public, CPD officers, and CPD civilian employees alleging misconduct by CPD officers. Internal complaints from CPD officers are very rarely submitted to the board. The board does not have explicit authority to receive anonymous complaints; however, complaints can be filed anonymously with the CPD Professional Standards Unit (PSU).<sup>39</sup>

The PRAB's authority over complaints varies depending on the origin of the complaint. Complaints originally filed with the board are eligible for independent investigation.<sup>40</sup> Complaints originally filed with the CPD's PSU may be reviewed by the board at the conclusion of the investigation.<sup>41</sup> It may also investigate any complaint concerning the department's policies or procedures. In practice, because the PRAB does not have dedicated investigative staff, all complaint investigations are conducted by the CPD PSU and then forwarded to the board for review once completed. The PRAB may request that the PSU conduct additional investigation if it does not concur with the department's findings.<sup>42</sup> If the additional investigation conducted by the PSU is not to the satisfaction of the board, it may initiate an independent investigation into the alleged incident.<sup>43</sup> Complainants who are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint investigation have access to an appeals process described in the Procedures section of this report. Minor complaints, such as discourtesy, are eligible for mediation, if originally filed with the PRAB, or informal alternative resolution, if originally filed with the CPD.

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39. According to the Police Commissioner at the time of NACOLE's site visit, the department's Professional Standards Unit will investigate any complaint, including anonymous ones.

40. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.080(A).

41. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.080(A).

42. Rules and Regulations of the Police Review & Advisory Board, Sec. 3(c), <https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/policeandadvisoryboard/policeandadvisoryboardrulesandregulationsadopted20111005.pdf>.

43. Rules and Regulations of the Police Review & Advisory Board, Sec. 3(e).



## Recommendations

The PRAB is authorized to recommend findings and discipline only on complaints originally filed with the board.<sup>44</sup> The ordinance does not explicitly authorize the PRAB to recommend findings and discipline on complaints that were filed with the police department and then reviewed by the PRAB at the conclusion of the PSU investigation.

In the realm of departmental policy and procedure, the PRAB has a broader authority to issue recommendations. It may at any time issue recommendations on departmental policy, procedures, and training.<sup>45</sup> The Police Commissioner does not have a statutory requirement to respond to the PRAB's recommendations, but over the last decade the police commissioners have accepted and implemented the PRAB's recommendations.

## Access to information

The board's access to information is not specified in the ordinance and originally was built upon an adversarial public hearing model. For the last decade, the PRAB has had access based on an agreement where the CPD PSU investigates most complaints on behalf of the PRAB and shares the report of the investigation, computer-aided dispatch logs, police reports, supplemental statements, and third-party video (when available) with PRAB staff and board members. (This information is not public but is confidential under the provisions of the Massachusetts Public Records Law.) In addition, at the time of the site visit, relations between the department and the board's ES were characterized by both parties as strong, cooperative, and respectful. These arrangements, in conjunction with PRAB's small caseload (see table 1 on page 14) and the fact that most complaints filed in Cambridge are related to conduct and demeanor rather than use of force or arrests, have allowed the board to obtain the information necessary for its work through the department without difficulty.

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44. Rules and Regulations of the Police Review & Advisory Board, Sec. 3(e).

45. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.080(B).

Once the PSU concludes its investigation, board members receive an investigative report containing the initial complaint, officer reports, and interview summaries. The PRAB also has regular access to computer-aided dispatch and stop records, body-worn and dashboard camera video, and use of force records. Copies of both closed and open PSU investigation files are made available to the board upon request.

The PRAB is also authorized to issue subpoenas with approval and assistance from the Cambridge City Solicitor.<sup>46</sup>

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46. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.040(F).

# Procedures

## Complaint intake and investigation

As mentioned earlier, complaints against CPD officers come in two ways—complaints can be originally filed (1) directly at the PRAB or (2) with the CPD’s PSU. The origin of the complaint determines the PRAB’s role in the investigation and its authority to recommend findings and discipline once the investigation is completed.

Community members, CPD officers, and CPD civilian employees can file complaints with the PRAB by phone, mail, or email or in person at the board’s office. Frequently asked questions about the PRAB and how to file a complaint are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Creole. Complaints can be filed with the CPD by phone, by email, or in person. The CPD website makes prospective complainants aware that the PRAB is an option for those looking to file a complaint. All complaints must be filed within 60 days from the date of the occurrence of the incident.<sup>47</sup> The board may accept by majority vote a complaint filed after 60 days through a written request providing good cause for the late filing.<sup>48</sup>

Complaints submitted to the board are forwarded to the department shortly after intake and vice versa. By ordinance, the board must conduct a “preliminary investigation” or initial review of the allegation within 10 days to determine whether or not the allegation merits a full investigation.<sup>49</sup> In practice, however, all investigative work is conducted by the CPD PSU.

The PSU has 60 days to complete its investigation. Upon completion, two sergeants and one lieutenant review the completed investigation before sending it to a deputy superintendent and the Police Commissioner for final review. Once approved by the Police Commissioner, the case is sent to members of the board for review.

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47. Rules and Regulations of the Police Review & Advisory Board, Sec. 2(b).

48. Rules and Regulations of the Police Review & Advisory Board, Sec. 2(b).

49. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.080(A).

**Table 1. Civilian and internal complaints filed against sworn Cambridge Police Department officers, 2012–2016**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Complaints filed with PRAB	7	8	5	4	5
Complaints filed with CPD	16	14	6	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>

Source: Information provided by PRAB ES.

## Complaint review, resolution, and disciplinary recommendations

The PRAB holds monthly public meetings where board members and the community can discuss matters concerning CPD practices. The ES or three members of the board may call a special meeting with at least 48 hours' notice.<sup>50</sup>

The board reviews complaints at each monthly meeting in closed executive session. Representatives from the CPD PSU are present to discuss the complaint investigation and answer any questions posed by board members. Police officers are dismissed from executive session thereafter so that the board can enter final deliberations on each complaint.

Following board deliberations, each complaint is assigned a recommended disposition of either cleared (not sustained), inconclusive, or sustained. Disciplinary recommendations up to a five-day suspension are issued to the Police Commissioner. Disciplinary recommendations greater than a five-day suspension are forwarded to the city manager.<sup>51</sup>

## Mediation

Cambridge has two options for informal resolution of complaints: a department-run alternative resolution program and a formal mediation program managed by the PRAB.

The PRAB has been running the mediation program since 2012. Since then, only two mediations have taken place.

50. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.060.

51. The Police Commissioner is authorized to issue suspensions up to five days. Any greater discipline is handled by the Cambridge Personnel Department and is determined by the city manager.



Complaints referred to mediation or alternative resolution are typically low-level complaints such as rudeness or discourtesy. Complaints received by the PRAB may be referred to mediation after intake and review by the board's executive secretary. Those who have submitted a complaint directly to the department may be referred to the department's alternative resolution program, which is conducted by the local nonprofit Community Dispute and Settlement Center. In both cases, participation is voluntary for both the complainant and subject officer(s). PRAB mediations are conducted by the executive secretary.

Mediations conducted by the PRAB that are deemed unsuccessful may still go through the formal investigation process. Alternative complaint resolutions conducted by the department are not eligible for investigation if the process is not successful.

### **Policy recommendations**

The board has issued several policy recommendations to the Police Commissioner in recent years. Recommendations have typically emerged from policy deficiencies identified during a complaint review or by community members who have raised them with the board. Policy recommendations are typically presented orally during monthly meetings or meetings between the executive secretary and CPD administration.

For example, in the case of the incident involving Professor Gates where the individual involved did not file a complaint, the board recognized the importance of addressing CPD practices and issued several recommendations. The board recommended that departmental training and policy place stronger emphasis on civilians' First Amendment rights, reviewing all disorderly conduct arrests, and modifying complaint forms to make civilians aware that complaints can also be filed with the PRAB.<sup>52</sup> Additional recommendations issued by the board have included improving training on interactions with persons with mental illness and revising protocols guiding interactions with sexual assault victims.

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52. Cambridge Police Review and Advisory Board, "Report Concerning the Public Complaints Filed with the Police Review and Advisory Board," June 28, 2010.

## Community outreach

PRAB members with strong community ties and advocacy experience are responsible for the board's outreach efforts. For example, one board member who was a public school teacher undertook outreach efforts to the city's youth. This included working with the city's Department of Human Services youth programs to develop a workshop on interactions between youth and officers. Similarly, a board member who was formerly a victim's advocate at the district attorney's office worked with an advocacy group for homeless women called On the Rise, the YMCA, YWCA, and Cambridge LGBTQ+ Commission. In 2013, the board conducted outreach to low-income families in public housing developments, neighborhood associations, and community groups. In 2016, the board held or participated in 10 public outreach sessions.<sup>53</sup>

The board has also collaborated with the CPD and other city agencies to expand outreach to both the community and officers.

## Public reporting and transparency

The PRAB ordinance requires quarterly reports on its activities and complaint findings to the mayor, the city manager, the city council, and the public.<sup>54</sup> In practice, however, the PRAB only reports regularly to the city manager.

The PRAB does not regularly publish standalone annual reports. Updates on PRAB activities are presented to the public in writing in two locations: (1) the citywide annual reports<sup>55</sup> and (2) the city's report on its adopted budget for each fiscal year.<sup>56</sup> The former summarizes the board's accomplishments for the year; the latter includes a variety of statistical information including complaint volume, outreach events attended, and training sessions attended. Final dispositions of complaints are made public through a public docket, which is available by request.<sup>57</sup>

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53. City of Cambridge Adopted Budget Report FY 2018, <https://www.cambridgema.gov/publications/detail.aspx?path=%2fsitecore%2fcontent%2fhome%2fDepartments%2fFinance%2fpublications%2f2017%2f05%2ffy18adoptedbudget>.

54. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.040(E).

55. City of Cambridge Annual Reports are available at <https://www.cambridgema.gov/GIS/interactivemaps/publicinformationoffice>.

56. Budget reports are available at <https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/Budget>.

57. Cambridge City Code Chapter 2.74.080(C).



The wave of high-profile incidents in 2020 between police and community members prompted widespread calls for greater community oversight of law enforcement agencies. Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement: Report on the State of the Field and Effective Oversight Practices, a white paper by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement, outlines the history of civilian oversight including reference to this case study of the Cambridge Police Department and eight others.



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Visit the COPS Office online at [cops.usdoj.gov](https://cops.usdoj.gov).



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