

Title of Recommendation		PCCEP Recommendation to Issue a Formal Correction and Apology Regarding Normandale Park Shooting Communications	
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Summary of Recommendation:

The Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing (PCCEP) recommends that the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) correct their statement about the Normandale Park shooting on February 19th 2022 as well as publicly apologize and acknowledge harm caused by the original incorrect statements. PCCEP strongly recommends PPB inform the public about what went wrong in their communications process and procedural changes they have undertaken to ensure nothing like this happens again.

Body of Recommendation:

In light of the tragic events surrounding a shooting at a 2022 Black Lives Matter protest, PCCEP has reviewed the communications issued by the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) and found substantial concerns regarding the accuracy and transparency of the information shared with the public. We believe correcting the record and apologizing for the harm caused by misinformation is important in the context of this individual event and holds implications for community trust in the PPB in any context.

On February 19th, 2022, Benjamin Smith showed up to a Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest with a gun. He approached a group of corks who were there to divert traffic and protect community members at the protest. Smith confronted this group and shot at them, killing one on site and gravely injuring others. A corker named June Knightly passed away that evening while another, Deg, was left paralyzed from Smith's bullets and has since passed away.

Due to the swift and heroic actions of an armed individual at the protest, the gunman was incapacitated with a single shot. Unfortunately, in the days and weeks to come, PPB got the story wrong. This violent attack and subsequent life-saving action was minimized to the media as a violent exchange of gunfire without accurate context.

The original press release stated that the incident "started with a confrontation between an armed area homeowner and armed protesters," which incorrectly implicates the victims of the attack as equal perpetrators of violence. Former Chief Lovell held a virtual news conference three days later on February 22nd and repeated talking points about the violent confrontation between a homeowner and protestors. The release and news conference were picked up by news outlets and promoted false ideas about violent protestors and those attending similar Black Lives Matter events or protests.

PCCEP recognizes that the scene was chaotic and that heroic efforts were made by various community members to prevent further loss of life. We also recognize that due to the nature of these incidents, PPB may not have had full information when the press release was first issued. However, correspondences between the PPB and the District Attorney's office indicate that PPB had more accurate information on the night of the shooting or the next day, yet failed to correct their statements. It is exactly this type of discrepancy between official statements and witness testimony, public records from external agencies, and other corroborating information that can lead to public distrust in the PPB.

PCCEP appreciates that PPB has made improvements to their public information process in recent years – most notably, the requirement that the Public Information Officer role must now be held by a civilian. However, the initial press release about the Normandale Park shooting has still not been corrected, and to this day, describes the incident as “a confrontation between an armed area resident and armed protesters.” While “homeowner” has been updated to “resident” and PPB published a statement on their website acknowledging that “some of the initial information PPB disseminated to media was found to be incorrect,” the statement does not acknowledge which information was incorrect. The statement also fails to mention the heroic actions of the corkers and community volunteers who saved lives that night due to their quick and efficient first response. Finally, PPB has still not addressed how the process originally broke down and resulted in inaccurate public information.

Remedies Requested

PCCEP has identified 6 remedies that we feel are important to repairing community trust in the PPB with regards to this incident. We recommend the PPB issue a formal statement that addresses the following:

1. What PPB stated incorrectly in the initial statement and a detailed explanation of how the process failed.
2. What corrections were made in the April 18, 2023 statement, what the limitations of that statement were, and why PPB made the decision to issue that statement without identifying what the original inaccurate information was.
3. What internal assessments have been done to identify where the system failed, including whether bias against the protestors was assessed. Specifically, PCCEP requests that PPB speak to the characterization of the Black Lives Matter event as an

“anti-police protest” as heard on the dispatch call, and whether the Bureau assessed whether this characterization impacted communications.

4. What internal changes have been made within PPB, if any, to prevent similar mistakes in the future. PCCEP requests a thorough explanation of updated policies and procedures and how they were changed as a result of what PPB learned from their mistakes.
5. An acknowledgement that the initial mistake and follow-up communications did not honor the general public with the transparency they deserve from their police bureau.
6. A public apology and correction of the record that includes information requested in items 1-5.

PCCEP welcomes the PPB’s engagement with this recommendation as an opportunity to uphold Portlanders’ rights to peacefully gather and protest, and to be protected by an accountable and transparent police force.

Note from PCCEP:

While PCCEP was in the process of writing this recommendation, PPB took steps to issue an [apology via YouTube video](#) to the victims and families of the Normandale Shooting. This video was issued on January 29, 2025, the same day this recommendation was scheduled to be approved. PCCEP appreciates that PPB worked with the victims and families to release an apology and acknowledgement that was responsive to their needs.

As PCCEP communicated to PPB and Chief Day in the several months of work we dedicated to this recommendation, PCCEP began work on this topic because it was submitted to us by various community members for consideration. PCCEP assessed the topic and agreed that it reflected larger areas of community concern that fall under our purview via the Settlement

Agreement. While PCCEP has taken every effort to be mindful of the perspectives of the victims and families (and we sense that there may be alignment between our interests and theirs), this recommendation intends to convey larger community concerns about transparency, accountability, equitable policing, and procedural improvements to the PPB that impact the general public. PCCEP approved this recommendation shortly after viewing the apology issued on January 29, 2025, because we agreed that the video did not fully address the remedies we identified. We appreciate that the PPB will evaluate our specific list of recommendations from the unique perspective our committee is positioned to provide.

How does this recommendation redress barriers to racial equity?

This recommendation directly addresses systemic barriers to racial equity by holding the PPB accountable for the inaccurate portrayal of a violent incident that impacted people participating in a Black Lives Matter protest. The original mischaracterization of the events, which portrayed protestors as aggressors, perpetuated harmful stereotypes about people who were practicing their First Amendment rights to protest for racial justice, including many protestors who belong to marginalized communities. By urging the PPB to issue a formal correction and apology, the recommendation seeks to correct the narrative and foster a more accurate understanding of the event. This, in turn, supports the broader goal of improving relations between law enforcement and communities of color, as it demonstrates a commitment to transparency, honesty, and fairness in how incidents involving marginalized groups are reported.

<p>How does this recommendation improve outcomes for people experiencing mental illness?</p>	<p>This recommendation indirectly improves outcomes for people experiencing mental illness by advocating for more accurate and transparent communication from the PPB. By correcting the initial misinformation about the shooting incident, the recommendation ensures that vulnerable populations, including those with mental health challenges, are not unfairly stigmatized or misrepresented. Accurate reporting and a commitment to transparency foster a safer, more understanding environment for individuals in mental health crises, especially in high-stress situations like protests. Additionally, by pushing for systemic changes and internal assessments within PPB—such as evaluating potential biases and improving crisis response training—this recommendation could help ensure better, more compassionate interactions with individuals experiencing mental health distress.</p>
<p>How were marginalized and underrepresented communities, including those who will be affected by this recommendation, engaged to shape, write and otherwise develop this recommendation?</p>	<p>PCCEP is comprised of community members who represent diverse and marginalized populations, including communities of color, individuals with mental health challenges, and others who have historically been affected by biased policing practices. These members, and the community attendees who provided public comment, played a critical role in authoring or otherwise shaping the recommendation.</p>

Resources

Please list all resources relevant to this recommendation

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/feb/19/blm-march-portland-shooting>
2. <https://www.oregonlive.com/crime/2024/08/the-normandale-park-gunman-left-her-paralyzed-in-death-she-took-back-control.html>
3. <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-murder-of-june-knightly/>
4. [Chief Bob Day Statement on 2022 Normandale Park Shooting - YouTube](#)

5. [PCCEP Full Committee Meeting 10/30/24 | Portland.gov](#)
6. [PCCEP Settlement & Policy Subcommittee Meeting | Portland.gov](#)
7. [PCCEP Full Committee Meeting 1.29.25 | Portland.gov](#)