



City of Boston, Massachusetts  
Office of Police Accountability and Transparency  
**Stephanie Everett, Executive Director**

**FY23 Annual Report**  
**July 21, 2023**

The Honorable Michelle Wu  
Mayor, City of Boston  
One City Hall Square, Suite 550  
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mayor Wu,

The Office of Police Accountability and Transparency (OPAT) is pleased to present our annual report concluding fiscal year 2023. Building off of the December 31, 2022 Semi-Annual report, this report will illustrate OPAT's continued efforts in building the foundation of our department while increasing our presence and impact in the City of Boston in pursuit of our mission to enhance accountability and transparency within the Boston Police Department (BPD).

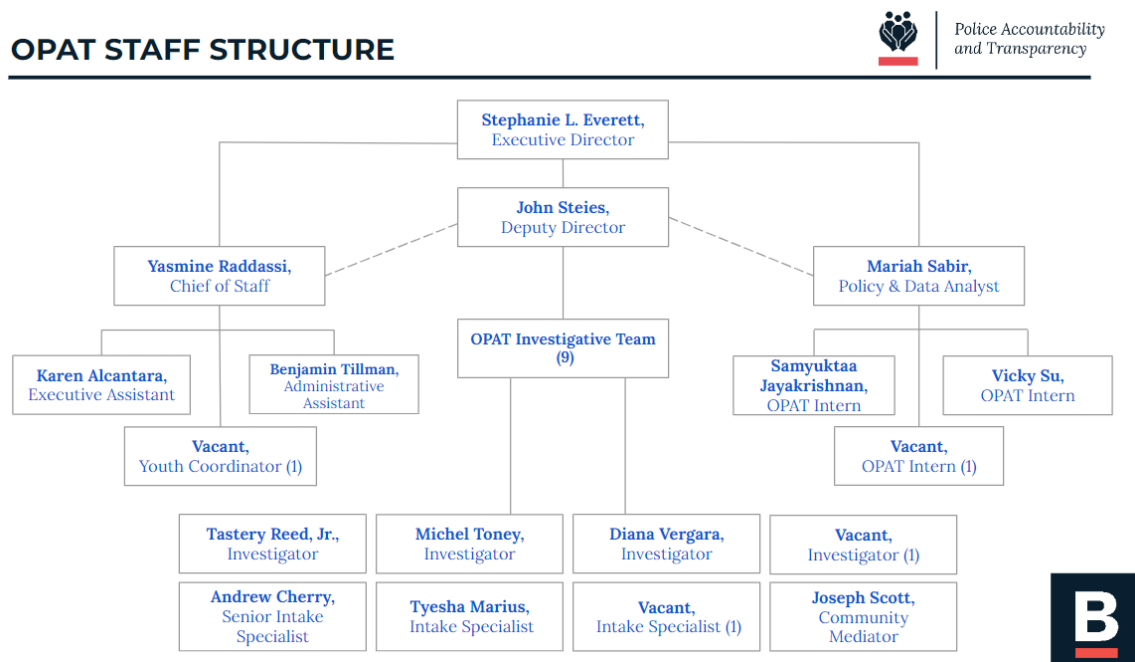
OPAT's guiding principle is the understanding that at its core, police misconduct and inequitable policies have systemic results that not only harm the individual directly impacted by the misconduct, but also result in a loss of that individual to their family, whether physically or emotionally. The family then leans in to offer support to the individual, resulting in a loss of the entire family being present in the community, causing the community to be impacted by this loss. These collective impacts result in economic disparities in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) households, as is evident in the data, and result in a lack of access to education and career opportunities. Although not mandated by Ordinance, OPAT is acutely aware of its obligation to address these impacts that have been felt for generations. Our work is guided by the need to address these impacts and do so through outcomes that include thorough, independent investigations of all complaints, analyzing data and policies, making recommendations for policy changes when we see potential harmful patterns, developing and/or updating policies that are outdated, as well as creating programming to ensure all voices are equitably seated and heard at all tables regarding police reform.

This report will highlight the work of the OPAT staff, OPAT boards, data analysis of the Boston Police Department's policing in our communities, interdepartmental efforts of city departments to strengthen community relationships through policy and community engagement, and finally,

recommendations that build on efforts to improve communication and trust building between the Boston Police Department and the community.

Our second year of operation came with as many successes as learning opportunities as we expanded staff and began to receive and respond to complaints. With the support of the Administration, we grew our team to meet the needs of the community by adding an Intake Specialist, an Investigator, and a Community Mediator. In addition, we created and welcomed the first cohort of the Youth Advisory Council. These staff hires aided in the creation of the complaint process, increased community participation/outreach, and continued partnership with the BPD. In addition, working collaboratively with the BPD and the Office of Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, we partnered with Conan Harris and Associates and Strategy Matters to strengthen the hiring, retention, and promotion of BIPOC personnel at BPD. These efforts resulted in recommendations that will create equitable promotion opportunities and increase retention within the department through merit-based rewards and tracking of recruitment efforts.

## **OPAT STAFF ONBOARDING**



Throughout FY23, OPAT continued building out the department's personnel. Moving from a headcount of 9 to 14, our department onboarded a third Investigator, a second Intake Specialist, the department's first Community Mediator, and two year-round interns; an FY23 investment request. In FY24, OPAT looks forward to rounding out our staff by onboarding our fourth and final Investigator, third and final Intake Specialist, and our Youth Coordinator position, which will support youth engagement work, including our year-round internship program, Youth Advisory Council (YAC), and our Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity (OYEO) Youth Jobs participants.

Additionally, we would like to highlight the following accomplishments:

- Held three community listening sessions in February (one virtual and two-in person) to share more about OPAT's work and solicit community feedback, as well as our Get To Know Commissioner Cox event at the Bruce C. Bolling building in June;
- Continued to develop the OPAT City of Boston website, including our online intake form, numerous dashboards, all board meeting materials and investigative report summaries;
- Conducted bi-annual professional development for all staff to ensure our work is done with the highest integrity and industry standards;
- Hosted the second annual mandatory OPAT board member training. Board members received training on conflict of interest, how complaints are processed through OPAT, and a refresher on their specific role within this work;
- Key staff members received Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) certification;
- Presented OPAT's FY24 budget at the City Council budget hearing;
- Completed our move into our office space at 2201 Washington St in Nubian Square;
- Continued engaging with similar organizations around the country to learn best practices on police reform, including a trip to New York City's Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB);
- Successfully welcomed our first participants from OYEO's Youth Jobs program.

#### ❖ *Community Engagement*

OPAT continues to seek out new and creative ways to engage with our community and to be an asset to its residents. In addition to the charitable efforts our office has been engaged in (most immediately) within our community here in Nubian Square, we have made ourselves available to the public at every opportunity.

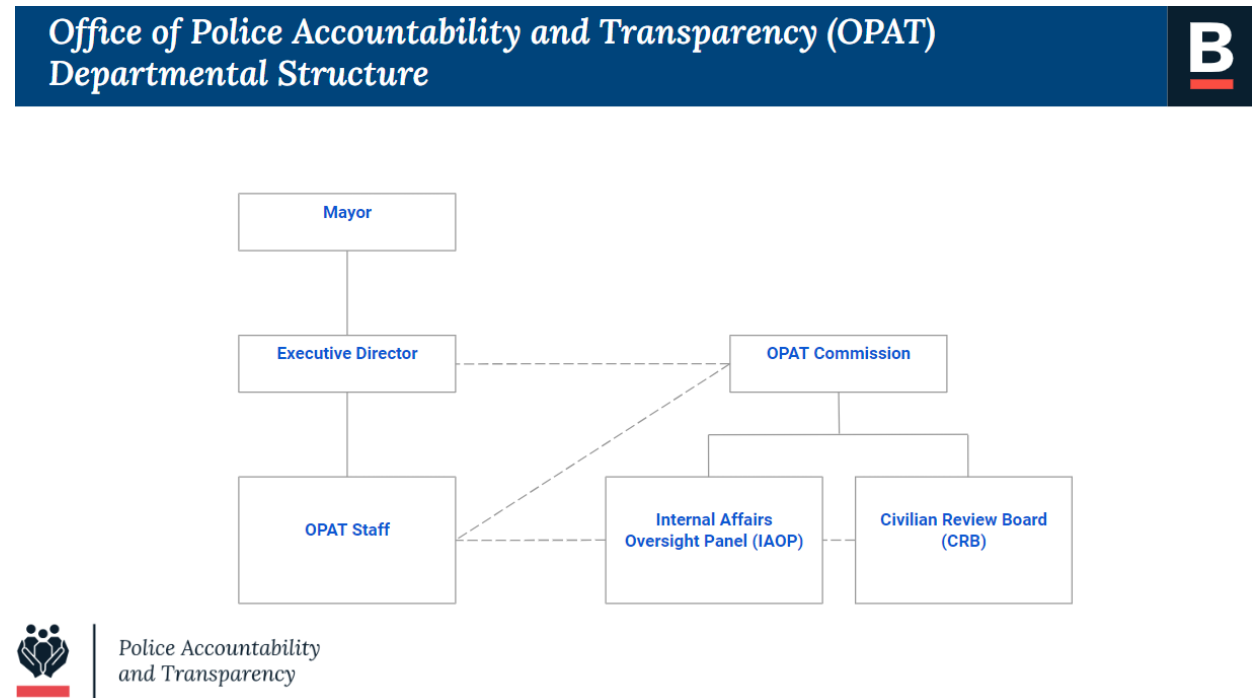
In this effort, OPAT hosted four community listening sessions in FY23, including one in June featuring BPD Commissioner Michael Cox. These sessions were opportunities for the department to share more about our work and to receive helpful feedback from the community on what they are seeking in regard to police oversight within Boston. OPAT was also proud to attend each of Mayor Wu's coffee hours held throughout the city in May and June.

Another critical step OPAT has taken to further connect with the community is expanding our social media presence. The department regularly posts helpful information regarding upcoming board meetings and other community involvement. OPAT can be found on Twitter @BostonOPAT and on Facebook at Office of Police Accountability and Transparency - City of Boston.

Finally, each of OPAT's three boards continues to meet in publicly-noticed sessions at least quarterly, amounting to 15 board meetings in FY23. Each of these is open to the public, with the OPAT Commission accepting public comments as well. Minutes and videos of the meetings are posted publicly on our website soon after they occur.

Community engagement will continue to be a critical piece of everything that we do going forward in an effort to establish further the trust that we've spoken about. In FY24, we look forward to hosting more listening sessions throughout Boston and further defining the work that we do while reporting to the public on that work.

## OPAT BOARDS



The work of all Boards serves as the connection between the community at large, OPAT staff, and BPD. The OPAT Boards consist of three panels/boards:

- The Office of Police Accountability and Transparency Commission (the OPAT Commission), charged with informing and updating the community about the work of OPAT and being informed by the community on matters of police transparency, BPD policies and procedures, and other matters of policing in Boston;
- the Civilian Review Board (CRB), with the primary responsibility of reviewing and investigating specific complaints against the Boston Police Department and its employees; and
- the Internal Affairs Oversight Panel (IAOP), responsible for the review of completed investigations of BPD's Internal Affairs Division.

As governed by the OPAT Ordinance, Board Members participated in a half-day board retreat hosted by OPAT staff this past spring to learn more about their role and expectations. The

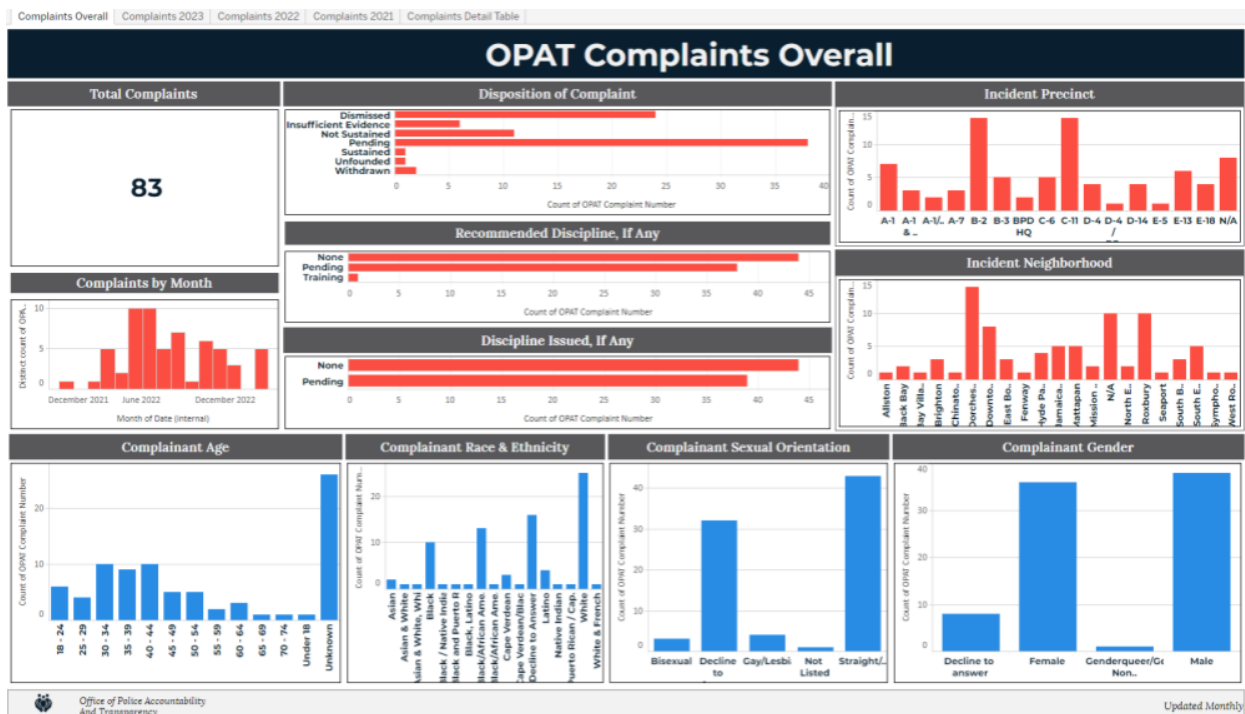
retreat included training on social media, conflict of interest, and guest speakers from the City of Boston’s Law Department and Labor Relations.

The OPAT Commission held 6 meetings in FY23: July, September, and December of 2022, as well as January, March, and June of 2023. The OPAT Commission has established central priorities of assessing regulations, setting investigation timelines, setting 2023 CRB and IAOP meeting dates, and establishing in-person meeting and remote participation standards. Additionally, the Commission resolves disputes between CRB and IAOP and settles cases and appeals when a quorum cannot be reached on either board.

The CRB held 5 meetings in FY23: August and November of 2022, as well as two meetings in March and one in June 2023.

The IAOP held 4 meetings in FY23: August and October of 2022, as well as January and April of 2023. All meetings are open to the public, and our meeting schedule for the remainder of the calendar year has been established and is available on our website.

❖ *CRB Complaint Recommendations*



Dashboard from [boston.gov/opat](http://boston.gov/opat) illustrating all complaints to-date which have moved from intake to investigation

OPAT continues to receive a variety of complaints from members of the community regarding allegations of police misconduct. The complainant demographics and incident areas vary widely, and the department is making every effort to capture all information required by our ordinance in receiving these complaints via online, telephone, paper, and in-person submissions. This

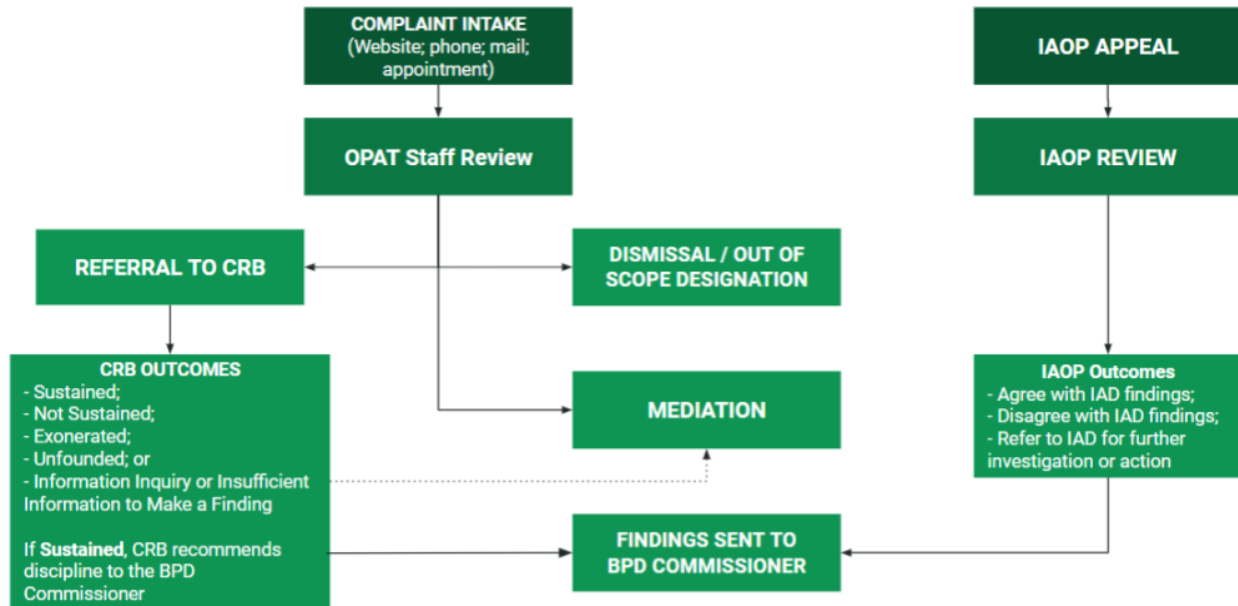
information is presented publicly on our website; a screenshot of the dashboard can be seen above.

In addition to the comprehensive reporting done via the dashboard, data is now broken down by year to make consumption easier for the public. Future goals include updating the information more frequently, which will further increase transparency and aid in our goal to utilize the data for more considerable reform efforts.

OPAT received 126 complaints in FY23. This number does not correspond directly to the total complaints figure above as the dashboard reports by calendar year. Additionally, OPAT staff screen all complaints at the intake stage to determine if a complaint falls within the jurisdiction of our office to investigate and if the allegation contains misconduct pertaining to a potential violation of BPD's Rules and Procedures. Complaints that do not meet these criteria, as well as incomplete complaints where the complainant is unable to be contacted, are dismissed by the department prior to referral to the CRB. Complainants are notified of this via the contact information they have provided to OPAT. Complainants have the ability to return to the department and have their case reopened should contact be established and/or new information is provided to OPAT necessitating the reopening of the complaint. With these factors in mind, 54 of 126 (43%) complaints received in FY23 moved from intake to investigation. The remaining cases were dismissed due to the reasons stated above.

In FY23, 42 cases were presented to the CRB. Of those 42, the following dispositions were provided by the board:

- 14 Dismissed
- 11 Not Sustained
- 10 Insufficient Evidence to Make a Finding
- 5 Out of Scope
- 1 Sustained
- 1 Unfounded



Flowchart illustrating the pathway for both CRB complaints and IAOP appeals within OPAT

### ❖ *IAOP Appeal Recommendations*

Per ordinance all BPD appeals are processed through IAOP. These appeals include direct appeals from original complainants who believe their investigation was not fairly and/or thoroughly carried out by the BPD. In addition, IAOP also receives automatic and random appeals per the city ordinance.

In FY23, 11 appeals of BPD IAD decisions were presented to the IAOP. Of those 11, the following dispositions were provided by the board:

- 9 Agree with the IAD findings
- 1 Disagree with the IAD findings
- 1 Refer the case to IAD for further investigation or action

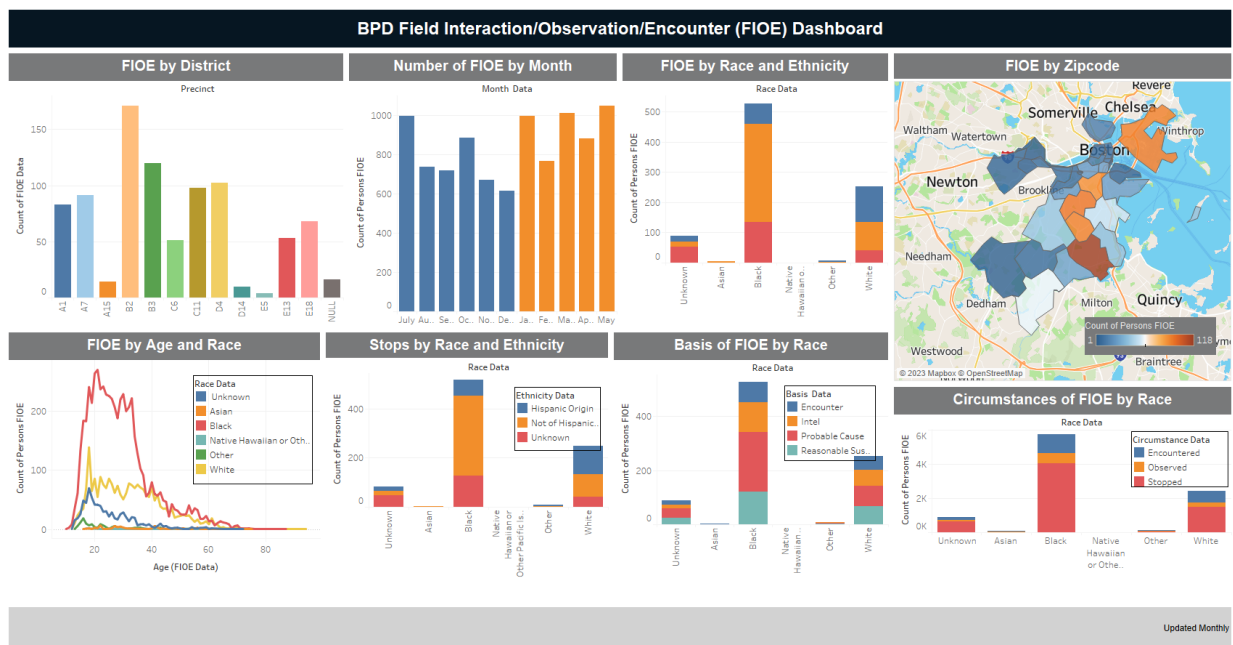
## **POLICE REFORM POLICY AND DATA**

### ❖ *Field Interrogation/Observation/Encounter (FIOE) Data and BPD Statistics*

Since January 2022, OPAT has continued to host monthly meetings between our department and BPD to help create a conversation about the improvement of data collection, investments in systems, the creation of data sources, data to be collected, and possible enhanced sharing. Having this data frequently available has allowed OPAT to identify and report on specific trends consistently. The dashboards allow transparency of BPD's work to the community at large. As well as Researchers, Journalists, and other professionals, to use this information to inform their own work and keep it current on our efforts to identify needs of improvement.

OPAT continues to work with BPD to identify the current limitations regarding data collection as existing and incoming data needs to be simplified and more transparent. Some data is not publicly available, including Force Strength Reports on department demographics, officer firearm discharge incidents, 911 or officer-initiated calls for service, and completed investigation records of public complaints. BPD has electronic systems but lacks sufficient systems or personnel to relay the data to necessary stakeholders that would allow for more frequent updates to OPAT and the public.

An example of data simplification can be found in the collection of FIOE data. As presently performed, individuals subjected to an FIOE by BPD are identified, subjectively, by the Officer(s) and assigned an FIOE identification number. An individual can be stopped multiple times and assigned a different number each time. This type of collection behavior results in continued distrust in the community, because complaints of targeted stops have been alleged and cannot be proven. It would be beneficial to see an identification number assigned to known individuals. This will serve to dispel complaints of individuals being targeted and build trust within the community as the BPD can justify, when reasonable to do so, why an FIOE was conducted, and a permanent number was assigned to an individual. Additionally, FIOE reports given to OPAT are redacted, limiting the analyst's ability to conduct a complete transparent analysis. Understanding and respecting the need of BPD to do a FIOE explanation summary before public release, the same should not and cannot apply to OPAT. Our collective efforts need to include transparency in all data collection. Yet, with existing data issues OPAT and BPD have created a system where data is released and published regularly.







policies that hinder positive relationship building amongst the community are removed while positive working relationships are established. OPAT continues to work to implement each item spelled out in the ordinance establishing the department. We look forward to continuing to engage with the OPAT Commission on regulations pertaining to how OPAT operates and how we achieve our mission of accountability and transparency within the Boston Police Department. In the spirit of implementing the ordinance, OPAT has worked diligently to obtain a discipline matrix from the BPD, allowing CRB members to recommend discipline should the board vote to sustain an allegation of police misconduct. OPAT looks forward to implementing this matrix in FY24.

As another part of implementing the ordinance, OPAT has continued to engage the BPD Commissioner on BPD's response to sustained findings provided by the CRB and disagreement with IAD decisions by the IAOP respectively. The ordinance requires the Commissioner to respond in writing to these outcomes. This represents a critical component of transparency and accountability as OPAT posts these responses for members of the public to view on our website.

Finally, there exists a strong need for the Boston Police Department to modernize its Rules and Procedures. While BPD's Rules and Procedures are written for sworn officers, they are also what civilians rely on to ensure officers carry out their sworn oath of duty correctly. It is not enough that the interpretation of the Rules and Procedures are only understood by members of the Boston Police Department. A full modernization of these Rules and Procedures would go far in the process that has begun in relationship building within the community. There should be no doubt or interpretation required to understand a Rule and/or Procedure carried out or executed in our community.

Upon encountering challenges, OPAT has consistently chosen to find solutions to any hindrances through policy creation, collaboration efforts, and other creative actions with partners in and around the City. We look forward to continuing to propel the work forward collaboratively, with the community and with the BPD.

## **FY24 - THE MARCHES HAVE ENDED, BUT OUR FEET ARE STILL MOVING**

Looking ahead to FY24, there are a number of top priorities for the department. OPAT was thrilled to advocate for and receive new funding in the FY24 budget for the department in the form of two investments. We firmly believe that these investments fulfill Mayor Wu's FY24 priorities which include a Boston that is healthy and safe and which closes the racial wealth gap.

Firstly, an FY24 investment of \$10,000 builds on an investment received in FY23, which saw OPAT procure the services of consultants Conan Harris & Associates and Strategy Matters. The consultants conducted a full review of the hiring, firing, and promotion of BIPOC officers within BPD, a requirement in OPAT's ordinance. Their report resulted in findings, such as suggestions for creating a dashboard to track recruitment and creating standardized testing dates to ensure equity in promotional practices. This has created a solid foundation for Boston Police Department's newly hired Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officer, DEI Committee members,

and OPAT to work from, which will provide guidance on ways to strengthen the BPD workforce equitably and, in turn, will nourish the relationship between this institution and the community.

Secondly, OPAT secured \$8,000 to fund annual stipends for our Youth Advisory Council (YAC). YAC is a group that aims to give youth a space to be heard around police reform issues while striving to eliminate the disconnect between youth and the police in our city. Given the fact that policing disproportionately impacts low-income and communities of color, we believe that providing stipends of \$18 for YAC participants will see these participants benefit tremendously from being compensated for their time on this board. Additionally, this participation offers young people exposure to careers within public safety.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for your attention to our annual report. Please feel free to reach out to me should you have any questions regarding any of its contents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Everett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephanie L. Everett, Esq.  
Executive Director, OPAT