

Oklahoma City and Tulsa Public Safety Oversight Policy Comparison

Established in August 2023, Oklahoma City uses a nine-member Community Public Safety Advisory Board (CPSAB), to review completed police investigations as a civilian advisory board. Tulsa's September 2026 proposed Title 16 Ordinance would establish a professionally staffed Office of Independent Review and Oversight of Public Safety and create a separate eleven-member Civilian Oversight Board (COB). The Office would review serious cases; the Board would assess the Office, hear community concerns and recommend policy changes. Both city's models leave discipline and operations with existing officials.

It is important to note that Oklahoma City has a Strong Council/City Manager form of government and City of Tulsa has Strong Mayor/Council form of government.

An advisory board is just one component of what we are proposing. Whereas OKC asks civilians to review completed cases, Tulsa's Office would put professional staff in charge of that technical work and give civilians responsibility for evaluating whether the oversight system is working.

Oklahoma City: the Police Department investigates and when the investigation concludes the civilian board reviews the completed case and makes recommendations to the Police Chief.

Tulsa proposal: When a qualifying investigation opens the professional Director is notified and monitors, then the Office reviews the completed report and evidence. The department or division head considers the review before a final decision. Meanwhile, the Civilian Board evaluates the overall oversight system and recommends policy changes.

The Tulsa Board has less direct access to individual case files than Oklahoma City's board. Under the Tulsa draft, the professional Office handles the detailed case review. The Board receives aggregate or appropriately redacted information and cannot demand privileged material or become the custodian of investigative personnel records.

What Oklahoma City establishes as precedent:

- Civilian review of completed police investigations already operates in Oklahoma's largest city.
- An independent recommending body can exist without taking discipline or command authority from the Police Chief.
- By April 2025, Oklahoma City reported 61 cases reviewed during the board's inaugural year: 42 resident complaints, 17 officer-involved shootings and two in-custody deaths.

Our proposal is structurally different from Oklahoma City's civilian review of police investigations. OKC has a volunteer advisory board that reviews completed cases. Tulsa's approach would assign technical monitoring and case review to a trained, full-time professional Director of an independent office. The Civilian Oversight Board (COB) would evaluate that office, identify patterns, hear from the public and make policy recommendations. Neither body disciplines employees or runs a public-safety department. Department and/or Division heads retain that authority.

Issue	Oklahoma City's Community Public Safety Advisory Board	Tulsa's proposed Office of Independent Review and Oversight of Public Safety
Legal structure	Council resolution; independent recommending body.	Title 16 ordinance; professional Office and separate Civilian Oversight Board.
Oversight staff	No separate professional oversight office identified in the board structure.	Full-time Director with professional and support staff and lawful contract services, subject to appropriations.
Timing	Board reviews the investigative process and results after departmental investigations are completed.	Office is notified shortly after a covered investigation opens, monitors its progress, then reviews the completed investigation.
Individual cases	Civilian board members perform the review.	Professional Office reviews individual cases. Civilian Board evaluates the Office and systemic issues using aggregate or appropriately redacted information.
Mandatory matters	Formal resident complaints, excessive-force complaints and other matters Professional Standards considers of public concern.	Specified serious incidents include firearm or deadly force, deaths in custody, duty-related deaths, force causing death or serious bodily injury, alleged felonies, and certain alleged misdemeanors involving force or threats.
Additional matters	Police Professional Standards identifies other incidents of public concern.	Mayor may request Office review of other internal investigations of possible public-safety misconduct.
Records and evidence	Board reviews completed investigations; public description does not specify the same access to underlying evidence.	Office receives completed report and access to interviews, evidence and evidence summaries, subject to law and confidentiality rules.
Compulsion	Current public board description does not assign subpoena authority.	Director may ask City Council to consider using its existing Charter authority; neither Office nor Board issues subpoenas.
Effect on decisions	Recommendations go to Police Chief; unresolved concerns may go to City Manager.	Department head ordinarily waits for Office report or 10-business-day review period before final determination. Recommendations are nonbinding.
Discipline and command	Advisory only; no power to discipline officers.	Office and Board cannot impose discipline, direct personnel actions or control public-safety operations.
Agency scope	Current operational description centers on police investigations.	Police, fire, 911, emergency management, animal control, security and code enforcement functions.
Board membership	Nine voting members: one from each of eight wards and one mayoral at-large member.	Eleven residents: one from each of nine Council districts and two at-large members.
Appointments	Ward members nominated by Councilors and at-large member by Mayor; Mayor appoints, Council confirms.	Councilors nominate one resident from their own district and the Mayor nominates two at-large residents of the city. By Charter authority, the Mayor appoints all board members, subject to Council confirmation.
Independence rules	Excludes current City employees and sworn officers, immediate family of active City sworn officers, certain litigants and persons with specified felony histories.	Excludes current City officers and employees and governmental public-safety personnel; member and immediate family cannot be current or former City employees.
Public process	Public meetings and resident comment; board makes recommendations and reports activities.	At least ten Board meetings annually, at least three with public comment, quarterly public meetings with public-safety leadership, plus annual Office and Board no later the September 30 each after the close of the previous fiscal year.