



## HISTORY

The Milwaukee Board of Fire and Police Commissioners was established in 1885 by state law and is one of the oldest police oversight agencies in the nation. The Commission was originally created to remove the fire and police services from the influences of politics. Until that time, in Milwaukee, as in most cities, chiefs of both departments were appointed by the mayor, who used these appointments, and the appointment of police officers, as a form of political patronage. The new law made the Fire and Police Commission responsible for setting employment standards, testing candidates for positions in the Fire and Police Departments, and appointing both chiefs. In 1911, the Commission's authority was expanded to include all aspects of operational oversight of the Fire and Police Departments. The Commission's authority and responsibility are specified in Wisconsin Statute 62.50, and in the Milwaukee City Charter.

## DISCIPLINARY APPEALS

Members of the Fire and Police Departments may appeal to the Commission if they believe they have been unfairly dismissed, demoted, or suspended for more than five days. The Commission may sustain, modify, or deny the Chief's action.



## MILWAUKEE FIRE AND POLICE COMMISSION

Michael G. Tobin, Executive Director  
200 E. Wells Street, Room 706-A  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

24-HOUR MESSAGE LINE  
414-286-5000

OFFICE HOURS  
Weekdays 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

WEBSITE  
[www.milwaukee.gov/fpc](http://www.milwaukee.gov/fpc)

## MEETINGS

The Commission and its committees hold regular meetings and disciplinary hearings weekly. These meetings are open to the public, and members of the community are encouraged to attend. Meetings are usually held in City Hall, with periodic meetings held in other community locations. The meeting time, location, and agenda is published in advance on the Commission website.



## MILWAUKEE FIRE AND POLICE COMMISSION

## WHAT THE FIRE AND POLICE COMMISSION DOES

Under state law and the City Charter, the Fire and Police Commission is the head of the Fire Department and Police Department. The Commission sets overall policy while the chief of each department manages daily operations and implements the Commission's policy direction and goals. Specific Commission functions include establishing recruitment and testing standards for positions in the Fire and Police Departments, hearing appeals by members of either department who have been disciplined by their Chief, independently investigating and monitoring citizen complaints and disciplining employees for misconduct.

The seven part-time civilian Commissioners and full-time Executive Director are appointed by the Mayor and must be approved by the Common Council. The Commissioners routinely spend many hours each week on Commission business, and serve as the citizens' voice in police and fire affairs and as a means of ensuring more responsive and effective city government. The Commissioners' concerns are reflective of the community-at-large, and their priorities include initiatives to reduce crime, increase safety, and maintain effective responses to fire and medical emergencies.

## CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

The Fire and Police Commission has full authority to independently investigate and discipline department employees up to and including termination from employment for acts of misconduct. A person may file a complaint against an employee of the Fire or Police Department for specific acts of inappropriate conduct. Complaints can be initiated in writing, in person, by telephone, by fax, by e-mail, through the Commission website, and through recognized community referral organizations.

## POLICY OVERSIGHT

The Commission, supported by a full-time professional staff, prescribes policies and standards for both the Fire and Police Departments. The Commission exercises this important oversight function through regular meetings with both department chiefs and their staff, by conducting research and analysis of policies and procedures, by implementing reforms, and by direct public input through the citizens appointed to the Commission.

## RECRUITMENT & TESTING

Since 1885, no person has been appointed or promoted to any position in either the Police Department or the Fire Department without Commission approval. The Commission has a long-standing commitment to ensure the public safety workforce is representative of the Milwaukee community. Following Commission standards, Department of Employee Relations staff administer a variety of examinations, including written, physical ability and oral tests, background investigations, and medical, drug, and psychological screenings. Applicants who pass all components are hired according to their total score on an eligible list. Firefighters and Police Officers are hired at intervals for training classes; other entry-level positions are filled as vacancies occur.

When the position of Chief becomes vacant in either department, the Commission determines qualifications, solicits applications, and appoints the new Chief. Chiefs of both departments are hired for four-year terms, renewable at the Commission's discretion.

