

BEFORE THE POLICE BOARD OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO

IN THE MATTER OF THE SUSPENSION OF)
POLICE OFFICER LAWRENCE R. WILLIAMS,) No. 14 SR 2318
STAR No. 18542, DEPARTMENT OF POLICE,)
CITY OF CHICAGO.) (CR No. 1001300)

FINDINGS AND DECISION

On or about June 16, 2011, the Superintendent of Police ordered the suspension of Police Officer Lawrence R. Williams, Star No. 18542, for thirty (30) days for violating the following Rules of Conduct:

Rule 6: Disobedience of an order or directive, whether written or oral.

Rule 14: Making a false report, written or oral.

Officer Williams received notification of this suspension on October 3, 2011. This matter was referred to the Police Board on January 30, 2014. This suspension is being reviewed by the Police Board pursuant to Section 9.6A of the Agreement between the City of Chicago and the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #7, which states in relevant part “In the event an officer does not make an election within ten (10) working days, the recommendation for suspension will be reviewed by the Police Board.”

The Executive Director of the Police Board assigned this matter to Hearing Officer Fredrick H. Bates. Hearing Officer Bates reviewed the investigation file and submitted a written report to the Police Board.

The members of the Police Board reviewed the Summary Report of the investigation file, the Command Channel Review reports, and Hearing Officer Bates’ report. Hearing Officer Bates made an oral report to and conferred with the Police Board before it rendered its findings and decision.

POLICE BOARD FINDINGS

The Police Board of the City of Chicago, as a result of its consideration of this matter, finds and determines that:

1. There is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation, set forth below, that Police Officer Lawrence R. Williams, Star No. 18542, violated Rule 6, and the allegation is therefore **not sustained**.

On November 14, 2006, at or about 12218 South Yale Avenue, at approximately 1522 hours, Officer Lawrence Williams disobeyed General Order 02-08-03, Section IV.B., in that he fired a warning shot.

On November 14, 2006, Officer Lawrence Williams, approximately 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighing 145 pounds, responded to a criminal action at 12218 South Yale Avenue involving a mentally ill, approximately 6-foot, 300-pound combative offender who had just injured a senior citizen as a result of an unprovoked battery. The offender was combative with the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Chicago Fire Department (CFD) personnel who responded to the scene. When Officer Williams and his partner arrived at the scene, the offender became combative with them. Officer Williams's partner used his OC spray on the offender without any result, other than to further anger the offender. Being afraid for his safety, Officer Williams un-holstered his weapon. His partner ultimately got behind the offender, so Officer Williams began to re-holster his weapon to avoid crossfire. A struggle ensued with the offender. Officer Williams's partner made an "Officer Needs Assistance (10-1)" call; however, several EMS and CFD personnel were able to assist Officer Williams and his partner in subduing the offender.

In a statement provided that day, Officer Williams indicated that his weapon accidentally discharged while he was attempting to re-holster it during the struggle with the offender. He

Police Board Case No. 14 SR 2318
Police Officer Lawrence R. Williams
Findings and Decision

provided a consistent statement to the Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA) on August 12, 2009, almost three years later. No one was injured when the weapon was discharged.

Approximately two years after the incident, on September 8, 2008, an IPRA investigator interviewed two paramedics who were at the scene responding to the senior citizen's injuries. One paramedic stated that she heard someone yell: "get down!" Then she heard a gunshot. She looked outside her vehicle and saw Officer Williams's gun pointed upward. Her partner told IPRA that he heard a gunshot and looked outside the ambulance and saw the offender chasing Officer Williams. Other CFD personnel were able to help subdue the offender.

On September 16, 2008, several CFD firefighters were interviewed by IPRA. One did not recall hearing any shots, three others heard a gunshot, but did not see either officer with their weapon drawn. They all indicated that it took the police and CFD personnel to subdue the offender. One of the firefighters noted that the offender was so large and muscular that it took two sets of handcuffs linked together to cuff him.

Again on September 22, 2008, multiple CFD personnel were interviewed by IPRA. A lieutenant stated in pertinent part that Officer Williams fired a warning shot into the air with one hand, while fending off a charging offender with the other hand. He could not say whether Officer Williams fully extended his arm into the air. Another firefighter indicated that when the offender charged Officer Williams he fully extended his arm in the air and fired a warning shot. They both stated that it took the police and CFD personnel to subdue the offender.

On October 1, 2008, another CFD firefighter was interviewed by IPRA. He stated that after one officer sprayed the offender, he grabbed the other officer who drew his weapon and fired one shot in the air. A firefighter did a leg sweep on the offender who fell to the ground, and a number of

Police Board Case No. 14 SR 2318
Police Officer Lawrence R. Williams
Findings and Decision

people then subdued him so the police could handcuff him.

In a witness statement given to the Office of Professional Standards (now known as IPRA) on June 20, 2007, Officer Williams's partner stated that they responded to a call to assist CFD personnel. As they approached the offender he assumed a fighting stance. He then pepper sprayed the offender, who wiped his face and said, "What the fuck was that?" The offender then rushed Officer Williams. He tried to subdue the offender from behind. He heard a gunshot. The offender continued to attack Officer Williams as the two fell to the ground. They were able to subdue the offender. In a statement to IPRA on August 12, 2009, Officer Williams's partner stated that the discharge was not a warning shot to his knowledge.

Finally, as noted above, Officer Williams provided a statement to IPRA on August 12, 2009, in which he stated that when he and his partner arrived on the scene the offender began coming toward them in an aggressive manner despite their telling him to stop. He drew his weapon for officer safety. His partner went behind the offender and grabbed him. As he began to holster his weapon the offender charged him and his weapon discharged. Finally, in his statement to IPRA on August 12, 2009, Officer Williams denied that he fired a warning shot, but stated that as he protected his weapon from being grabbed by the offender, it may have been in a somewhat upward position. His August 12, 2009, statement to IPRA is consistent with the statement he provided immediately following the incident on November 14, 2006.

The statements provided by the witnesses do not adequately resolve the question as to whether or not the round fired by Officer Williams was a warning shot as opposed to an unintentional discharge. There is insufficient evidence to prove the allegation that Officer Williams fired a warning shot.

2. There is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation, set forth below, that Police Officer Lawrence R. Williams, Star No. 18542, violated Rule 14, and the allegation is therefore **not sustained**.

Subsequent to the discharge of his weapon on November 14, 2006, at or about 12218 South Yale Avenue, at approximately 1522 hours, Officer Lawrence Williams made false reports regarding the details of the incident.

See the findings set forth in paragraph no. 1 above, which are incorporated here by reference. Given the various and conflicting accounts of the incident, the Board finds that there is insufficient evidence to sustain the allegation that Officer Williams made intentional false reports regarding the details of the incident.

POLICE BOARD DECISION

The Police Board of the City of Chicago hereby adopts the findings set forth herein by the following votes:

By votes of 9 in favor (Demetrius E. Carney, Ghian Foreman, Melissa M. Ballate, William F. Conlon, Michael Eaddy, Rita A. Fry, Susan L. McKeever, Elisa Rodriguez, and Rhoda D. Sweeney) to 0 opposed, the Board finds that the allegations that Police Officer Lawrence R. Williams violated Rule 6 and Rule 14 are **not sustained**.

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the suspension of Police Officer Lawrence R. Williams, Star No. 18542, for a period of thirty (30) days is **reversed**.

This disciplinary action is adopted and entered by a majority of the members of the Police Board: Demetrius E. Carney, Ghian Foreman, Melissa M. Ballate, William F. Conlon, Michael Eaddy, Rita A. Fry, Susan L. McKeever, Elisa Rodriguez, and Rhoda D. Sweeney.

DATED AT CHICAGO, COUNTY OF COOK, STATE OF ILLINOIS, THIS 17th DAY OF APRIL, 2014.

Police Board Case No. 14 SR 2318
Police Officer Lawrence R. Williams
Findings and Decision

Attested by:

/s/ Ghian Foreman
Vice President
Police Board

/s/ Max A. Caproni
Executive Director
Police Board

DISSENT

The following members of the Police Board hereby dissent from the Findings and Decision of the majority of the Board.

[None]

RECEIVED A COPY OF

THESE FINDINGS AND DECISION

THIS ____ DAY OF _____, 2014.

GARRY F. McCARTHY
Superintendent of Police