OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS FOR DECIDING POLICE DISCIPLINARY CASES
2 January 2024

The Chicago Police Board is an independent board of nine civilians responsible for deciding the most serious police disciplinary cases—those cases in which the Superintendent of Police recommends that a sworn officer be discharged from the Chicago Police Department.

How does a discharge case reach the Police Board?

Civilian complaints and CPD notifications of alleged police misconduct received by the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA).

Investigation by COPA, CPD Internal Affairs, or City Inspector General.

Four possible outcomes of investigation: Sustained, Not sustained, Exonerated, Unfounded.

If complaint is sustained (allegation supported by substantial evidence), discipline is recommended to the Supt.

If the Supt. recommends discharge, written charges and specifications filed with the Police Board.

How does the Police Board decide discharge cases?

Charges filed with the Police Board and served on the accused officer. Charges are then posted on the PB website.

Case assigned to hearing officer; the Supt. is represented by Corp. Counsel; Officer by her/his attorney.

Disciplinary hearing at which witnesses testify under oath (the hearing is open to the public).

Decision based on the evidence presented at the hearing.

Final vote at PB public meeting. Detailed written decision issued and posted on PB website.

The Role of the Police Board

- The role of the Board is to be an impartial decision-maker that makes decisions based on the evidence made part of the record at the disciplinary hearing.
- All of the Board’s disciplinary hearings are open to the public. Both the Superintendent and the accused Officer have a right to due process—they each have a right at the hearing to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses.
- The Board takes final action on all cases in public at its monthly meeting, where each Board member’s vote is announced and recorded.
- The Board posts on its website its written decisions, which include detailed explanations of the reasons for the Board’s findings.

Impartiality, due process, and transparency are essential values of any police disciplinary system—guided by these values, the Police Board strives to promote accountability and increase the public’s and police officers’ confidence in the process for handling allegations of police misconduct.