

POLICE BOARD
CITY OF CHICAGO

STATEMENT BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

October 24, 2017

Good morning, Madam Chairman and members of the City Council. I am Lori Lightfoot, President of the Police Board.

As you are well aware, in this past year, there have been significant changes made to Chicago's systems of accountability for oversight of the police department and related entities. With these changes, Chicago continues to have the most extensive civilian participation in the police disciplinary process of any major city in the United States. And there are likely more changes on the horizon.

As you know, the newly established Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA), the Police Department's Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA), and the Police Board have different roles in that process. The responsibility to receive complaints of alleged police misconduct will continue to lie with COPA. Depending on the nature of the allegations, either COPA or BIA will investigate the complaint.

The Police Board continues to function as a quasi-court in which we have the responsibility to decide cases when the Superintendent of Police files charges to discharge or suspend a police officer for more than thirty days; and to decide matters in which the Chief Administrator of COPA and the Superintendent of Police do not concur regarding the discipline of a police officer.

The role of the Board is to be an impartial decision-maker based on the record of evidence developed during disciplinary hearings. 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—at the hearing they each have a right to present evidence and to cross-examine witnesses. We take final action on all cases in public at our monthly meeting, where each Board member's vote is announced and recorded. Then we post on our website the 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 promotes accountability and increases the confidence both the public and officers can have in the process for handling allegations of police misconduct. The Board has a good working relationship with all stakeholders in our process and we work to address any issues quickly, appropriately and with a clear eye on transparency and the protection of the due process rights of all involved. We welcome the opportunity to work with the new Public Safety Inspector General and view that office as offering an important component of oversight.

The Board continues to closely monitor the amount of time needed to bring disciplinary cases to conclusion with charges filed. Keeping delays to a minimum is an important component of due process and reduces possible costs to the City. I have been very clear on behalf of the Board to communicate our very strong views about the imperative of completing hearings in a timely fashion.

The Board is focused on the time for the conclusion of a case once discipline has been filed. The Board has reduced the average amount of time necessary

to bring cases to a hearing and to make a decision by several months. Due to these efforts to improve the quality and timeliness of cases brought before the Board, we have no backlog. Currently, the average amount of time from the filing of charges until the first day of hearing is a little less than five months, and the average amount of time from the filing of charges until a decision is announced and issued is about eight months.

In preparing its budget submission for 2018, the Board made every effort to make the most efficient and effective use of resources as it carries out its responsibilities. And you will see no increase over the 2017 budget.

Thank you very much for your consideration, and I am happy to respond to any questions you have.