

POLICE BOARD
CITY OF CHICAGO

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

November 10, 2020

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the City Council. I am Ghian Foreman, President of the Police Board.

At no time in recent history has policing in Chicago faced greater challenges. We have seen here in Chicago and across the country protests calling for major police reform, and we are in the midst of an unprecedented public-health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 outbreak. Never in my lifetime has it been more important to make every effort to promote justice for all and bring about greater police accountability, while at the same time continue to work diligently to reduce crime and violence and build strong police-community relations.

During this time of crisis and reform, the values of impartiality, transparency, and accountability are essential. The Police Board furthers these important values in the way it carries out its responsibilities, including nominating candidates for Superintendent of Police and deciding the most serious police disciplinary cases.

The Board's primary duty in the recent search for a new Superintendent was to represent Chicagoans and to conduct the search with independence and integrity. To that end, at the outset of the search, we reached out to Chicagoans to listen to their views on the qualifications and experience the next Superintendent should possess. We held town hall meetings on the South, West, and North Sides of the City, and Board members and I met

with approximately 25 community organizations. We then brought this invaluable community input into our interviews with candidates and our deliberations. From there, we completed a thorough and independent review process, after which we nominated the three candidates we deemed best-suited to lead the Chicago Police Department. Mayor Lightfoot selected David Brown from the Board's list, and I am confident—even under these most trying circumstances—that under their leadership Chicago will rise to meet the many challenges we currently face.

Another major responsibility of the Board is to decide the most serious police disciplinary cases—those in which the Superintendent of Police files charges recommending that an officer be discharged from the Chicago Police Department. As an impartial decision-maker, the role of the Board, like that of a court of law, is to undertake a thorough review of the evidence in each case and render a fair, unbiased decision. (Please see the attachment for more information on the Board's role in the disciplinary process.)

The Board believes that the best way to ensure accountability and fairness is to make transparency a top priority throughout the disciplinary process. All of the Board's disciplinary hearings, like trials in court, are open to the public. The Board announces its decisions at its public meetings, and then immediately publishes on its website its written Findings and Decision, which include a detailed explanation of the reasons for the Board's action. All members of the public have an opportunity to attend the hearings and read the decisions so that they may make an informed judgment of the Board's work.

In addition to deciding police disciplinary cases, the Board will be considering appeals by applicants for a probationary police officer position who have been removed

from the Chicago Police Department's eligibility list due to the results of a background investigation. We expect to begin deciding these appeals in the first quarter of 2021.

In submitting our budget request for 2021, we are mindful of the fiscal challenges facing the City as well as the importance of ensuring police accountability. Thank you very much for your consideration of the Board's budget, and I am happy to respond to any questions you have.