

POLICE BOARD
CITY OF CHICAGO
STATEMENT BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

November 9, 2024

Good afternoon, Chairman Ervin and members of the City Council. My name is Kyle Cooper, and I am the president of the Chicago Police Board.

As you know, the Board has five main powers and responsibilities. It decides disciplinary cases brought against Chicago police officers. It rules on disagreements between the Chief Administrator of the Civilian Office of Police Accountability and the Superintendent of Police regarding officer discipline. It decides appeals by applicants to the Chicago Police Department who have been disqualified due to background examination results. The Board makes policy recommendations to the Chicago Police Department. And, finally, leads monthly public meetings that provide a unique opportunity for community engagement with the Superintendent and civilian oversight leaders.

As of today's hearing, the Police Board has adjudicated five disciplinary cases against Chicago police officers in 2024 ranging from wrongful shootings to failed drug tests. In two cases, the Board found the officer guilty of the charged misconduct and discharged him or her from the Chicago Police Department. One officer was found not guilty. One case was resolved via settlement. And, in the other case, the charges were withdrawn because the officer resigned before facing the disciplinary process.

Over the past year, however, the Police Board's role in handling serious disciplinary cases has changed as a result of Judge Mullen's March 21, 2024 order. This order confirmed an arbitrator's ruling allowing Chicago police officers, below the rank of sergeant, to choose to have serious disciplinary cases heard by an arbitrator instead of the Police Board. This case is currently before the Illinois Appellate Court, where the Fraternal Order of Police is challenging the rulings that (1) arbitration proceedings be open to the public and (2) accused officers may be suspended without pay while the arbitration case is pending. While the City filed its appellate brief last week, it is not challenging officers' right to choose arbitration. Therefore, it appears that the arbitration option for the most serious cases of alleged police misconduct is here to stay.

This new reality has already impacted cases before the Board. Currently, thirteen cases are on hold because the accused officers have requested that an arbitrator rather than the Board decide their cases. These cases will remain on hold until the establishment of a public arbitration process, which could take years.

Nevertheless, last month, four new disciplinary cases against FOP members were filed with the Police Board. The Police Board will continue to serve as an impartial decision-maker in these cases, performing this duty with independence and openness, as it always does.

Regarding disagreements between the Chief Administrator of the Civilian Office of Police Accountability and the Superintendent of Police, the Board has decided seven such cases in 2024. In these cases, the Board has ruled in favor of COPA six times and with the Superintendent once.

In addition to disciplinary and disagreement cases, the Police Board also considers appeals by applicants for probationary police officer positions who have been removed from the eligibility list due to background examination results. We have seen an increase in the number of appeals filed this year, and the Board has decided 55 appeals so far in 2024.

Regarding the Consent Decree, the Board remains committed to the reforms in police accountability and transparency that are contained in the decree. In fact, in the most recent report, the Independent Monitor found the Police Board to be in full compliance with 11 of the 14 paragraphs for which the Board is responsible and in preliminary compliance with remaining three paragraphs..

Finally, the Board's monthly public meetings, which are broadcast live by CAN TV, provide an important forum for discussions on police-related issues. In addition to monthly addresses by the Superintendent of Police and the Chief Administrator of the Civilian Office of Police Accountability, the Board has hosted presentations on various topics. This is a two-way dialogue—at every meeting, the public can raise questions and offer comments, and the Board tracks community input and follows up with the Police Department to ensure responsiveness to community concerns. Our meetings generate significant public interest; CAN TV informed us that the September meeting had over 32,000 live viewers, and the April meeting had more than 50,000.

Notably, the Board's budget is modest compared to other public safety departments. In fact, the Board's 2025 budget request is actually lower than this year's appropriation.

The Chicago Police Board's objective and unbiased work is essential to maintaining accountability, transparency and trust between the Chicago Police Department and the community it serves. By handling disciplinary cases, disputes between COPA and the Superintendent and facilitating public engagement through open meetings, the Board upholds a commitment to justice and responsiveness that benefits all Chicagoans. Our role as an impartial decision-maker is vital to fostering a safer, more transparent, and inclusive city, and we are proud to support the City of Chicago in advancing these values.

Thank you very much for your consideration of my comments and the Board's budget. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.