



CCPSA
COMMUNITY COMMISSION FOR
PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Budget Hearing Opening Statement
Adam Gross, Executive Director
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Good morning, Chairman Ervin and members of the Committee. My name is Adam Gross, and I am the Executive Director of the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability. I am joined by Commission President Anthony Driver Jr., and we have members of the department staff in the box.

This is our first budget hearing since the permanent system the City Council voted to create has been in place. District Council members were elected for the first time last year. And this March, the District Council Nominating Committee wrapped up almost a year of work in which they fleshed out the application process, got input from people around the city about what qualities to look for in commissioners, did broad outreach, received and reviewed more than 120 applications, and then nominated people to fill all seven positions on the Commission. Then the Mayor selected and the City Council confirmed members of the permanent Community Commission. Commissioners took office in June, replacing the Interim Commission that had served for the previous 16 months. The system the City Council voted to create in 2021 is now coming fully to life. Here are a few examples of how it works.

The system creates more opportunities for the police superintendent to collaborate and partner with community. It also creates more ways to hold the superintendent accountable to the people of Chicago. In 2023, the Commission led the search that resulted in the selection and confirmation of Superintendent Snelling, and that process has played out as the ordinance intended. The Commission nominated then-Chief Snelling because Commissioners believed that he would be a great leader for the department, and that they could build a strong, respectful working relationship with him that could result in better police department policies and practices and more accountability. And that is what has been happening since Superintendent Snelling was confirmed last year.

One example is the successful collaboration the Commission has developed with CPD in making policy. As you know, by ordinance, the Commission has the authority to set policy for CPD. Both the Commission and CPD can draft policies, and the ordinance sets out a process where the Commission and CPD work together to make changes and try to come to consensus. But, ultimately, the Commission can decide. Except for General Orders covered by the Consent Decree, any new or revised CPD General Order needs to have the support of a majority of the Commission in order to become official policy. The Commission and CPD have occasionally had some strong disagreements, but they have worked through them all, and by the time General Orders have come up for a vote, there has been strong agreement between the Commission and CPD.

Over the last year, the Commission and CPD have worked together on several policies, including the general order that says that police officers cannot associate with members of criminal or biased organizations. CPD and the Commission worked together for months on the policy. The Commission made important changes to the policy that helped to define what a criminal organization is, what a biased organization is, and what it means to associate with such organizations. The Commission helped to more clearly define what behavior is not permitted. The Commission got substantial community input while working on the general order, including a lot of input from District Councils, and Commissioners consulted extensively with national experts. A new policy went into effect early this year. After the new policy went into effect, the Commission continued to do additional community engagement, and through that process, identified a few new issues with the policy. So the Commission and CPD went back to the table and made some additional changes. The result is a policy that both Commissioners and CPD think will be clearer, stronger, and more impactful.

When the Commission works on policy, it conducts broad outreach to educate people about the policies under consideration, and to get detailed input. We provide an opportunity for people to provide comments at the Commission's monthly public meetings. We collect input from District Council members, and we ask them to get input from their constituents. We organize targeted listening sessions with a wide range of organizations, including business groups, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, labor groups, social services providers, and other organizations. We meet with the police unions. We also conduct online surveys, usually targeting both civilians and police officers. And we engage extensively with subject matter experts. That process produces better policies with more public support.

We see the benefit of that process in work the Commission is doing on traffic stops. Since the time the Commission was created, people across the city have come to the Commission to share concerns about traffic stops. When the Commission interviewed candidates for superintendent, the Commission included questions it had received from civilians and police officers across the city, and in response, then-Chief Snelling shared some of his own concerns about the department's approach to traffic stops. And when Commissioners attended a large meeting at the FOP Lodge to hear from police officers about their concerns, they heard officers raise many of the same issues about traffic stops that they had heard in community meetings. The Commission has not yet started formal discussions with CPD about traffic stops, but when those conversations begin, it will be incredibly helpful to have received extensive input from a wide range of people across the city, and it will be especially valuable if we continue to hear similar stories from people from so many different neighborhoods and backgrounds.

Another key function of the Commission is to set goals each year for the Police Superintendent, the COPA Chief Administrator, and the President of the Police Board. Just like with policy making, it is a very collaborative process, but at the end of the day, the Commission has the authority to set the goals. Once the goals are set, Commissioners meet at least quarterly with the Superintendent, the Chief Administrator, and the Police Board President to assess progress. This year, the Commission's goals for the Superintendent include launching a workforce allocation study, making progress to develop a comprehensive community policing strategy, strengthening victims' services, and improving CPD facilities. Goals for the Chief Administrator include increasing consistency in COPA's disciplinary recommendations and increasing timeliness in closing cases. We will soon begin the process

of doing an end-of-year evaluation of each leader's progress, and the Commission will release the final reports at the end of January.

The department also provides support to the District Councils that have been created in all 22 police districts. Elected District Council members, who receive small stipends, are responsible for working to improve policing and public safety in their districts. District Councils are required to hold public meetings at least once a month, so the department supports a minimum of 264 District Council meetings every year. The ordinance gives these elected officials broad discretion to decide what to do at their meetings. Some District Councils regularly bring in their district commanders for conversations with community members. Some discuss and work to address concerns about policing in the district. Some have participated in developing district strategic plans. Some meetings include discussions about policies that the Commission is working on. Some District Councils bring in trainers to teach community members how to provide life-saving care. And increasingly, they are working to develop programs in their communities. Some are exploring ways to develop or expand restorative justice programs. Some are planning youth summits. Some are exploring ways to further reduce police involvement in things like parking enforcement, so officers can devote more time to things that will have a bigger impact on neighborhood safety.

District Council members also provide regular updates to the Commission, to help ensure that the Commission's work is well informed by what is happening on the ground, in neighborhoods across the city. They also come together to identify shared interests and shared concerns, which could lead them to take on issues across districts or citywide, and propose priorities for the Commission.

We have a small staff to support all that work. We currently have 24 positions filled. We were on track to fill all 29 of the positions that were budgeted for this year, until the hiring freeze went into effect. We are grateful that the proposed budget includes the five positions that we have not yet filled. The vacancies include two positions for lawyers, which are essential for many reasons, and three positions to help broaden and deepen our community engagement and public affairs work, especially for District Councils.

The ordinance creating the Commission and District Councils says that they exist to increase public safety, strengthen accountability, build trust and improve interactions between the Police Department and the people it serves, encourage community-based, and evidence-based approaches to public safety, increase efficiency in the use of public safety resources, and help to bring the City into compliance with the Consent Decree. That is an ambitious agenda. This budget will help us to advance it.

Thank you. We look forward to your questions.