

CHARLOTTESVILLE POLICE CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** February 12, 2026

**Scheduled Time:** 6:30 p.m.

**Location:** CitySpace - 100 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902

**Board Members Attending:** Dr. Jeffrey Fracher (Chair), Dr. Kyle Dobson (Vice Chair), Andrew Frye, George Dillard Jr., Ruairi Vaughan, Albe LaFave, Nathalie Reaves, Caron LeNoir-Kelly.

**Board Members Not Attending:** N/A

**Guests:** Chief of Police Michael Kochis, Captain Tony Newberry, Lieutenant Jake Via

**Call to Order:**

- The meeting was called to order by Chair Dr. Jeffrey Fracher at 6:30 p.m. Dr. Fracher noted the Board meets every second Thursday of the month. He announced that the March meeting would be held downstairs in the Parks and Recreation conference room due to budget sessions occupying the main room.
- Mr. Walker called the roll. All eight Board members were present, constituting a full Board.
- Dr. Fracher reviewed the ground rules for the meeting, including respectful conduct, the public comment process, the three-minute time limit for public speakers, and the reminder that public comment periods are not opportunities for question-and-answer dialogue.

**Welcome of New Board Members:**

- Dr. Fracher welcomed the two newest Board members, noting the Board now has a full complement of eight members: Nathalie Reaves and Caron LeNoir-Kelly.
- Mrs. Reaves introduced herself, noting she has lived in the Charlottesville area since 1990. She currently works for the City Department of Human Services with youth.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly introduced herself as a journalist and entrepreneur who has lived in Charlottesville since 2019.

**Agenda and Minutes Approval:**

- A motion was made by Mr. Vaughan to approve the current meeting agenda (February 12, 2026) and the minutes from the January 8, 2026 meeting. Motion seconded by Mr. Frye and approved unanimously by members present.

**Announcements:**

- Mr. Walker announced that the next internal Community Statistics (CompStat) meeting hosted by the Police Department is scheduled for February 19, 2026. Board members are invited to attend on a rotating basis, one member at a time. Interested members should contact Mr. Walker by email.

- Mr. Walker reminded the Board that the March meeting will be held in the Parks and Recreation conference room on the floor below CitySpace, due to budget sessions in the main room.
- Mrs. Reaves shared information about an upcoming Teen Expo hosted by the Department of Human Services at Carver Recreation Center on Friday, March 20, 2026 at midday. The event will feature opportunities for teens to apply for summer and part-time jobs, vendors, workshops, and community engagement activities. Mr. Walker noted this would be a good opportunity for the PCOB to have representation and requested Board member volunteers to help staff a table with office materials and outreach items.

#### **Independent Counsel Selection:**

- Dr. Fracher provided an update on the selection of independent counsel. The Board has been without independent counsel for over two years. Independent counsel is available should any legal issues arise in which the City Attorney would have a conflict of interest.
- Dr. Fracher explained the selection process: The City Attorney's Office vetted and submitted three qualified attorney candidates. Mr. Walker and Dr. Fracher interviewed all three, two in person from Charlottesville and one via Zoom from Richmond.
- Dr. Fracher recommended Martin Conn of Moran Reeves Conn in Richmond, citing his passion for the Board's mission, his commitment to community-focused work, the availability of associate attorneys in his firm, and his overall presentation during the interview.
- Mr. Walker added that all three candidates were highly qualified and professional, and that the selection was based on finding the best fit for the Board's mission. He noted Mr. Conn's genuine enthusiasm for community-oriented legal work.
- Dr. Fracher noted that Mr. Conn's fee was the lowest of the three candidates, though this was not the deciding factor. He also noted that Mr. Conn being located in Richmond was not considered a barrier given the availability of Zoom and other remote communication tools.
- A motion was made by Mr. Frye to approve the selection of Martin Conn as the Board's independent counsel. Motion seconded by Mr. Dillard and approved unanimously. Mr. Walker will coordinate with the City Attorney's Office on the standard contract procedure.

#### **Public Comment (First Session):**

- No members of the public spoke during the first public comment period. One attendee was present online but did not raise their hand.

#### **Chief of Police Presentation:**

- Dr. Fracher introduced the City of Charlottesville Chief of Police Michael Kochis, along with Captain Tony Newberry (Professional Standards Bureau) and Lieutenant Jake Via (Internal Affairs).

#### **Chief's Remarks:**

- Chief Kochis expressed support for a functional PCOB, describing the Board as a bridge between the police and the community. He affirmed that both the community and the Police Department need this oversight body.
- Chief Kochis highlighted existing access and collaboration: the PCOB Office has unfettered access to the Axon body camera system (noted as unprecedented among Virginia PCOBs), participates in use of force review panels, and has been involved in policy recommendations and updates.
- Chief Kochis described the Department's CompStat meetings, held for approximately two years, where each sector commander reports on trends, community engagement strategies, and enforcement strategies on a monthly basis.
- Chief Kochis noted it is budget season and described it as a challenging budget year. The City Manager and his team are working diligently.
- Chief Kochis discussed the Department's strategic planning process. The current three-year strategic plan has three overarching priorities: (1) building community partnerships and addressing gun violence; (2) recruitment and retention; and (3) treatment and wellness of staff. A fourth priority, sustainability, is being added for the next three-year cycle, encompassing initiatives such as hybrid and electric vehicles. Assistant Chief Meehan is developing a stakeholder map, and the PCOB will be included as a stakeholder in the planning process.
- Chief Kochis reported on the Department's second Hispanic Community Academy, noting efforts to build relationships with the Hispanic community so that victims of crime feel comfortable reporting to police regardless of immigration status. He described meetings with the director of Sin Barreras (Without Barriers), families at Carlton Mobile Home Park, and expressed that the Hispanic community is experiencing significant fear. He affirmed the Department's commitment to continued outreach.

#### **Board Questions and Discussion with the Chief:**

- Dr. Fracher asked about the reported 51% reduction in gun violence and factors contributing to it.
  - Chief Kochis responded there is no simple answer. Contributing factors include strategic deployment of resources, the focused deterrence model (targeting a small group of individuals committing a disproportionate share of violent crime rather than flooding entire neighborhoods), community partnerships, and broader national trends. He noted that similar reductions are observed in other cities, including Richmond. He emphasized that the reductions are not solely the result of police work but reflect community-wide efforts.
  - Chief Kochis stated there are not believed to be fewer guns on the street. Most guns encountered are stolen from vehicles. While the number of shots-fired incidents has decreased, the rounds fired per incident have increased, with more large-capacity magazines and semi-automatic rifles being used.
- Dr. Dobson asked whether the Department has conducted longitudinal tracking or "social autopsies" on individuals involved in gun violence to understand mechanisms of change.

- Chief Kochis stated the Department has not conducted that type of analysis. He noted that three years ago the Department had approximately 30 sworn officer vacancies, compared to approximately two currently, which limited capacity for such work.
- Dr. Dobson emphasized the importance of identifying specific variables that changed between periods of high and low violence, noting the value of communicating those findings to the public.
- Chief Kochis referenced a report by Andy Block at UVA examining why youth carry firearms, linking it to feelings of being unsafe. He also discussed the importance of re-entry programs, noting the City's Home to Hope program as excellent but limited in capacity. He highlighted infrastructure challenges within the corrections system, including lack of Wi-Fi and internet access for vocational and college training, and noted that the Department of Corrections has approximately 50–60% vacancy rate with roughly 1,500 unfilled positions.
- Mr. LaFave asked about the nature of shots-fired incidents, who is firing and why.
  - Chief Kochis explained that large-capacity magazines and AR-15 style rifles are commonly involved, with random spraying of rounds at homes or properties. The incidents are often related to turf disputes and attempts to instill fear.
  - Mr. Dillard noted that shots-fired incidents are now occurring in areas of the city where they previously did not, and asked whether there is a geographic concentration.
  - Chief Kochis stated there is no single specific area of the city where incidents are concentrated. He also noted that despite the volume of rounds fired, there are fewer injuries than might be expected.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly asked whether there is a separate mental health response team that works alongside the police, including support for community members affected by shots-fired incidents.
  - Chief Kochis described the ANCHOR team, which pairs specially trained officers with paramedics and peer counselors. The team is approximately one to two years old with two officers assigned. He expressed a desire to expand the team to 24-hour coverage but cited capacity limitations. He referenced the City of Roanoke's Reset program as a model for post-incident neighborhood outreach.
- Mr. Vaughan asked about limitations on expanding the ANCHOR team's capacity.
  - Chief Kochis explained that expansion is primarily a funding issue. Adding a new officer to the team requires hiring, academy training (approximately five months), post-academy training (eight weeks), and field training (three to four months), a process of approximately one year from hiring to assignment.
  - Dr. Fracher noted that the ANCHOR team responds to individuals in acute mental health crisis, which also frees up patrol officers for other duties.

- Mrs. Reaves asked about the Department's approach to the unhoused population and the threat of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) intervening in cities, particularly regarding the fear in immigrant communities.
  - Chief Kochis described the Department's relationship-based approach to the unhoused community, noting that officers on the Downtown Mall and community involvement coordinators know individuals by name. He shared that he personally receives text messages from unhoused community members and has observed officers purchasing meals and hotel rooms for individuals on their own dime.
  - Regarding immigration enforcement, Chief Kochis stated the Department has never conducted immigration enforcement, as federal immigration law is primarily administrative and outside local police authority. He stated he cannot interfere with federal immigration enforcement, but the Department will not be involved in it. He characterized recent federal enforcement actions, referencing events in Minneapolis, as inconsistent with professional, constitutional, and community-based policing. He stated that such actions are making local police work harder and, in his view, are not making communities safer.
- Dr. Fracher asked about the Governor's executive order regarding cooperation with ICE.
  - Chief Kochis explained that the Governor initially signed Executive Order 10 on her first day, reversing Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 47, which primarily impacted jails and sheriff's offices rather than local law enforcement. More recently, the Governor issued an addendum pulling Virginia State Police and other state agencies from the 287(g) program, which had granted those agencies authority to enforce federal immigration law.
- Mr. LaFave asked about an incident in which ICE agents entered the Charlottesville General District Court while masked and without visible identification.
  - Chief Kochis clarified that the incident occurred at the Albemarle County Courthouse and involved the Albemarle County Sheriff's Office, not the Charlottesville Police Department. He stated his personal view that law enforcement officers should not wear masks absent an undercover capacity, and that communities have a right to know their police officers.
- Mr. Vaughan raised the scenario of an individual appearing with a gun and mask without proper identification, noting that absent confirmed identity as a federal agent, such a person could appear to be committing an abduction.
  - Chief Kochis agreed that in such a scenario, officers should and would intervene to determine what is happening, as they have a duty to intervene if they observe something illegal or unconstitutional. He distinguished this from situations where federal agents are clearly identified with badges and vests.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly asked whether there are specific initiatives to engage the veteran community in the area, including recruitment or community support.
  - Chief Kochis stated there is no specific program for veterans, though he expressed interest in a veteran's court. He characterized it as a capacity issue. He noted that while military veterans still represent a portion of recruits, the proportion is not as high as it once was.

- Dr. Dobson raised the challenge of accountability and measurement, noting that while significant work is being done by the Department, the community may not be aware of it. He emphasized the need for tracking and communicating officer activities, such as community engagement, in narratives and reports.
  - Chief Kochis discussed the difficulty of measuring trust but emphasized that trust is built through consistent presence and relationships. He described weekly community walks and shared an example of addressing a drainage issue raised by a resident during a walk. He cited results including a 51% reduction in gun-related incidents, a 17% reduction in part one crimes, and a 58% reduction in overdoses, noting these reflect community-wide efforts.
- Dr. Fracher asked about the status of School Resource Officers (SROs).
  - Chief Kochis confirmed that the Memorandum of Understanding has been signed and approved. Two SROs will be placed in schools for the next school year, one in the high school and one in the middle school. The selection process will be conducted jointly with the schools, with a preference for seasoned officers.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly asked whether police work is inherently social in nature and whether there is a line between police work and social work.
  - Chief Kochis agreed that the two are connected. He discussed the importance of de-escalation, the dangerous nature of removing weapons from the street, and the need to balance enforcement with community partnership. He emphasized that each community is unique in how it expects to be policed, citing the example of technology and surveillance cameras used in other Virginia localities that Charlottesville has chosen not to adopt.
- Chief Kochis invited all Board members to participate in community walks and ride-alongs with officers. Dr. Fracher encouraged all Board members to prioritize completing a ride-along.

#### **Board Work Plan and Focus Areas:**

- Mr. Walker noted that Sgt. Thomas provides weekly updates on community walk schedules, typically announced on Mondays, and that he would coordinate Board member participation. He also indicated he would distribute the ride-along participation form to all Board members.
- A brief discussion occurred regarding whether multiple Board members attending the same community walk could constitute a public meeting under Virginia law. Dr. Fracher suggested seeking guidance from the City Attorney and recommended coordinating through Mr. Walker in the interim.

#### **Community Outreach Framework:**

- Mr. Walker presented a community outreach process document developed in collaboration with Dr. Dobson. The framework is designed to guide intentional outreach to the community, track contacts and connections, and ensure that feedback and themes from community engagement are documented and brought back to the Board rather than lost.

- Mr. Walker described the framework's components: identifying community contacts (including churches, neighborhood associations, nonprofits, and individuals); establishing communication on terms preferred by each community member or group; conducting outreach through meetings, conversations, or events; and collecting input into a shared repository. The directory of community connections is maintained on a city server accessible only with city accounts.
- Mr. Walker noted the PCOB Office attended the NAACP meeting the prior Monday at Mr. Dillard's invitation (Mr. Dillard serves as Vice President of the local chapter), where the Board had approximately 20–30 minutes of dialogue.
- Mr. Walker presented a one-sheet informational document with PCOB contact information, two QR codes (one linking to the PCOB website and one to an anonymous survey asking about residents' experiences with policing), and a summary of the Board's purpose and process.

#### **Digital Presence and Social Media:**

- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly asked about the Board's digital and social media presence.
  - Mr. Walker explained that the PCOB has a city-issued website under his control, which contains meeting links, videos, agendas, and some reports. Most city departments do not have their own social media accounts; social media posts are coordinated through the City's Communications Team. Press releases are also an option.
  - Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly asked whether there is an interactive mechanism for the community to request the PCOB come to them.
  - Mr. Frye suggested adding an overt channel on the website through which community members could request the PCOB visit their group or meeting. This was well received by the Board.

#### **Discussion on Outreach Methods:**

- Mr. LaFave emphasized the importance of in-person conversations over digital surveys, noting the value of sitting with community members and verifying that their concerns are accurately represented.
- Dr. Dobson noted that different demographics engage through different channels, and that younger residents who interact with police most frequently may prefer social media and digital platforms. He advocated for a diverse range of outreach methods.
- Mr. Dillard emphasized that the Board's top priority must be earning the community's trust. He noted that community members may associate the PCOB with the police and stressed the need to demonstrate that the Board exists to help them. He encouraged the Board to take advantage of summer events and community activities to build relationships.
- Dr. Dobson noted that he studies trust professionally and can contribute expertise on measuring trust during work sessions.

### **Work Sessions:**

- Dr. Fracher stated that the Board cannot accomplish its priorities solely in monthly meetings and proposed beginning regular work sessions. He identified two priorities for work sessions: (1) operationalizing the community outreach plan, and (2) preparing ordinance revisions for City Council.
- Dr. Fracher requested that Mr. Walker send an email to all Board members asking for their available days, times, and preferences for scheduling work sessions. He asked members to respond as soon as possible.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly expressed support for smaller working groups or committees that could tackle specific areas such as social media outreach or youth engagement.

### **Ordinance Revisions Update:**

- Mr. Walker provided background on the history of changes to the Board's enabling ordinance, including the impact of state legislative changes and the introduction of collective bargaining. He noted that the original ordinance granted broad authority with limited detail on implementation.
- Mr. Walker reported that the Board and City Council held an initial joint meeting in September to discuss high-level cleanup items in the ordinance. City Council has expressed strong interest in a follow-up session to address more substantive changes.
- Key areas requiring revision include: the Board's complaint review and investigation processes, discipline recommendation procedures, hearing procedures, policy review authority, and the Board's stated purpose. Mr. Walker noted the goal is to narrow the scope while making the Board's authority more robust, clear, and meaningful.
- Mr. Walker indicated an April timeframe for the next meeting with City Council. He noted additional considerations include the possibility of changing the Board's name (so that "police" is not the first word) and revising the purpose statement to be more community-focused.
- Dr. Fracher emphasized the need to present City Council with a targeted, clear agenda for changes, noting that in seven and a half years the Board has not held a single hearing. He stated this can only be accomplished through dedicated work sessions.
- Mr. Dillard expressed optimism about the full Board's capacity to accomplish meaningful work.
- Dr. Fracher noted he has served on the Board for almost six years and expressed that this is the most enthusiastic and capable Board composition during his tenure.

### **Case Review Planning:**

- Mr. Walker announced that the goal for the March meeting is to conduct a case review in closed session. He will coordinate with the City Attorney regarding closed session procedures.
- The case review will serve as a practice exercise for both the Office (in preparing and presenting materials) and the Board (in understanding the process). Mr. Walker will

compile the most relevant body camera footage and facts into a manageable format for Board review.

- Dr. Fracher noted that information from closed sessions can be translated into generalized public policy recommendations without disclosing specific names or details, and encouraged the Board to provide feedback on the format.

**Public Comment (Second Session):**

- Kate Fraleigh (long-time observer of police oversight in Charlottesville for over nine years) addressed several topics:
  - She referenced the disproportionate minority contact reports that were a catalyst for the creation of the PCOB, noting that Matt Vitali from OAR has produced a new report on jail statistics showing continued disproportionality.
  - She commented on the Chief's statements regarding ICE, noting an apparent tension between the statement that police would intervene if agents are unidentified and the statement that police cannot interfere with federal enforcement. She suggested the Board help the Police Department write a policy specifying when an officer may detain or arrest an ICE agent under specific circumstances.
  - She referenced the Cure Violence model and the Central Virginia Violence Interrupters (CVVI) working in the Greenstone neighborhood, noting the organization needs additional funding and suggesting their budget should increase alongside the police budget.
  - She noted she had previously created an orientation manual for the PCOB and offered to share historical materials. Mr. Walker confirmed he has historical documents in the Office.
- KF provided feedback that audio quality is difficult for online listeners, particularly for certain speakers.

**Adjournment:**

- A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Dillard and seconded by Mr. Frye to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed unanimously by members present.
- Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:07 p.m.

Motion: Vaughan  
Second: Frye  
Approved Unanimously

Certified by James Walker, Acting PCOB Director

Date Adopted: 3/12/2026

Certified: 