

CHARLOTTESVILLE POLICE CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Date: February 23, 2026

Scheduled Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Office of Police Civilian Oversight - 106 5th Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902

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

Board Members Not Attending: George Dillard Jr.

Staff: James Walker, Acting Director.

Guests: N/A

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Chair Dr. Jeffrey Fracher. Mr. Walker conducted roll call.

Agenda Approval:

- A motion was made by Mr. Frye to approve the agenda for the special work session. Motion seconded by Dr. Dobson and approved unanimously by members present (Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly not yet present).

FOIA and Closed Session Procedures:

- Dr. Fracher introduced the agenda item, noting that Mr. Walker would review procedures related to the upcoming case review proposed for March 12, 2026.
- Mr. Walker presented a one-page overview of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and closed session procedures. He explained that all Board activities are subject to public record under FOIA, with the exception of confidential police department records for which the Board serves as a holder with custodianship remaining with the Chief of Police.
- Mr. Walker noted that meetings with two Board members and the Director do not constitute a public meeting and are not subject to public attendance requirements, which is the basis for the two-member meeting limitation.
- Mr. Walker reviewed the possible applicable exemptions being reviewed by the City Attorney's Office for entering closed session, including: (1) discussion of personnel performance, which may apply when reviewing officer conduct and potential discipline; (2) attorney-client privilege for meetings with legal counsel.
- Mr. Walker noted that a police auditor in Alexandria is working with lobbyists to pursue state-level legislation that would create a FOIA exemption specific to oversight boards so

that closed session exemptions would be clearer for entities like the PCOB. Mr. Walker indicated he would follow up with that office for potential support.

- Mr. Walker outlined the step-by-step procedure for entering closed session: a pre-written motion citing the specific subject matter, purpose, and applicable exemption; a vote to enter closed session; relocation to a private room; discussion confined strictly to the identified case; and return to public session with a certification vote affirming that only the stated subject was discussed. Members may register disagreement with the certification if they believe other matters were discussed.
- Mr. Walker emphasized that no decisions or votes may take place inside closed session. All recommendations, determinations, or opinions must be rendered in public session using generalized and redacted language, referring to individuals as Officer A, Officer B, Subject A, Witness A, etc., without disclosing names.
- Mr. Walker stressed that members must not discuss any details of closed session proceedings outside of the meeting, including in casual or general terms. Members should refer any inquiries back to the public meeting agenda and minutes.
- Mr. Walker reminded the Board of the importance of using city email accounts for all Board-related communications, as personal email and devices may be subject to FOIA requests. He noted there is personal liability for individual FOIA violations.

Upcoming Case Review – Proposed for March 12, 2026:

- Mr. Walker described the case proposed for review at the March 12 meeting. The complaint was received through the PCOB Office, referred from the City Manager's Office. The complainant observed an incident on the Downtown Mall and submitted a complaint on behalf of another individual. The Internal Affairs Department conducted a full investigation, and the complete case file and body camera footage from all officers involved is available.
- Mr. Walker explained that he would prepare the case materials in a condensed and digestible format before the March meeting, identifying key moments in the footage and relevant sections of the case file rather than requiring the Board to review hours of raw footage.
- Dr. Dobson requested that case review materials include a "*cast of characters*" reference document identifying everyone by their assigned designation (e.g., Complainant, Officer A, Officer B) to help Board members avoid using actual names during discussion.
- Dr. Fracher noted that this case review is intended as a practice exercise to develop and refine the Board's case review process before a high-profile case arises. The Board would have the benefit of seeing the Internal Affairs outcome and any discipline imposed by the Chief of Police, and could render opinions on whether they agree or disagree with the findings and discipline.
- Discussion occurred regarding what information Board members may reference during closed session. Mr. Walker indicated that relevant contextual information related to the investigation would likely be permissible but noted this would be confirmed with the City Attorney's Office, with whom he was meeting the following day.

- Dr. Fracher raised the question of who receives the Board's conclusions after a case review, noting that the ordinance will need to address whether findings go to the City Manager, Chief of Police, the public, or some combination. He expressed the view that the public must be among the recipients, as the Board serves as the eyes and ears of the community.

Ordinance Modifications:

- Mr. Walker introduced the discussion of ordinance modifications, distributing a copy of the current ordinance with highlighted sections identifying areas of concern.
- Mr. Walker reported that he met earlier that day with the new Assistant to the City Manager, who serves as the Board's liaison and handles policy matters. The City Council meeting date for presenting ordinance recommendations is May 18, 2026. Council is expecting the Board to present a specific redlined version of the ordinance with its recommended changes, rather than a menu of options.
- Mr. Walker identified the purpose statement (Section B, Powers and Duties) as problematic. The current language states the Board's purpose is *"to establish and maintain trust between and among the police department, the city council, the city manager, and the public."* Mr. Walker and Board members agreed this is overly generic, unrealistic, and improperly frames the Board's role as building trust on behalf of all city entities rather than providing independent oversight. Mr. Walker indicated he has a proposed replacement purpose statement prepared.
- The Board agreed that Mr. Walker would distribute proposed replacement language for the purpose statement for Board feedback, rather than attempting to draft language by committee.
- Mr. Walker identified independent investigations as the most significant area of concern in the ordinance. The current language requires the Board itself to receive, investigate, and issue findings on complaints. Mr. Walker outlined multiple barriers to this model: the Board cannot compel officer testimony; the police collective bargaining agreement imposes rights and timelines that must be adhered to; the Board has no investigator on staff; the city has indicated it will not fund an independent investigator; and a volunteer board lacks the capacity to conduct investigations.
- Mr. Walker recommended shifting to a model in which the PCOB Office monitors complaints and investigations conducted by Internal Affairs, the Office can audit specific data sets and practices, and the Board reviews findings and renders policy recommendations and opinions. This aligns with how many other oversight entities operate.
- Mr. Walker identified the discipline recommendation provision as another problem area. The police collective bargaining agreement and police policy requires discipline decisions to be reached by the Chief within 45 days of a complaint, a timeline that is unworkable given the Board's monthly meeting schedule and the need for Internal Affairs to complete its process first. Mr. Walker proposed that rather than recommending specific discipline for individual officers, the Board focus on reviewing whether discipline was consistent with policy and recommend policy changes regarding what level of discipline should apply to particular types of incidents.

- Dr. Fracher emphasized that while the Board would not directly impose discipline, its public recommendations regarding policy carry significant weight through transparency. He stated, *“I don’t want to feel like this is just a paper tiger. We have to have substance to what we find and what we feed back.”*
- Mr. Walker discussed the hearings provision. The original ordinance envisioned a trial-like format where officers would appear before the Board, but this is not feasible given that officers cannot be compelled to testify and subpoenas being issues to officers to appear are questionable and lead to additional complications. Mr. Walker suggested that hearings could still serve a purpose if reframed as forums for expert testimony, voluntary police department input, public comment, and data presentation on specific policy topics or trends.
- The Board briefly discussed subpoena power. While subpoenas of police officers are not viable, there may still be value in retaining subpoena authority for obtaining third-party records such as security camera footage or other records.
- Dr. Fracher emphasized the need to memorialize the Board’s current level of access to police records in the ordinance. He noted that the current Chief has been exceptionally cooperative, providing full unredacted access, but a future chief may not continue this practice. Mr. Walker confirmed that existing Standard Operating Procedure language addressing access could be incorporated into the ordinance.
- Mr. Walker noted the board membership eligibility provision, which currently allows Albemarle County residents to serve. He explained this was a controversial decision made by City Council to address insufficient applicants from the city. While not an urgent issue with the Board now at full membership, Mr. Walker pointed out that the current language contains ambiguous “or” statements that could technically allow someone with no connection to the city to qualify and even qualify as a resident outside of both the city and county. He recommended cleaning up the language.
- Mr. Walker raised the commendations section for Board discussion, noting it is uncommon for oversight entities to include such a provision.
- Dr. Dobson expressed strong support for retaining commendations, arguing that recognizing exceptional police work is the flip side of accountability and helps counteract the perception that oversight boards are solely negative. Mr. Vaughan agreed, noting that a record of commendations would signal to a future chief that the Board is a legitimate and balanced oversight entity.
- Mr. LaFave raised concerns about Section C, which authorizes the Board to issue public citations to officers, questioning what standard would be applied and whether the Board should be the entity issuing public recognition versus relaying compliments to the Chief. The Board agreed the commendations section should be retained but clarified to define the process and standards.
- Mr. Walker noted that the Board currently receives approximately 3 to 5 contacts per month, including complaints, compliments, commentary, and general inquiries. He indicated he would like to resume providing monthly reports on this activity.

- Mr. Walker discussed the alternative resolution (mediation) provision in the ordinance. He explained that no other oversight entity in Virginia includes such a provision because the Board cannot compel officers to participate in mediation. The police union would advise officers against participating due to potential civil and criminal liability exposure. While the Chief could initiate mediation through his own authority, the Board cannot. Mr. Walker suggested this section may need to be removed or significantly reconceptualized.

Process for Ordinance Revisions:

- The Board discussed how to organize the work of producing a redlined ordinance for the May 18 City Council meeting. Mr. Walker proposed that he prepare proposed revisions and distribute them for feedback, noting that much of the language has already been drafted over preceding months.
- The Board agreed on a workflow in which Mr. Walker would prepare proposed revisions, a small working group of Board members would review and refine the proposals, and the full Board would then review and provide feedback before a final version is brought for a vote. Dr. Fracher and Mr. LaFave expressed interest in working on the ordinance with Mr. Walker.
- Mr. Walker noted that all proposed revisions are subject to review by the City Attorney's Office.

Communication and Work Organization:

- Dr. Dobson emphasized the importance of scheduling dedicated work time with Mr. Walker at the PCOB Office rather than relying solely on email correspondence to advance Board priorities.
- Dr. Fracher proposed holding regular whole-board work sessions in addition to the monthly public meetings to maintain momentum and keep all members informed on small group work. The Board agreed that these should be scheduled at least a month in advance and that remote participation via Zoom would be available to an extent.
- Mr. Walker proposed sending a weekly email update to Board members every Tuesday, containing upcoming dates, community engagement events, and brief updates on work being done by any subgroups.
- Mr. Walker reiterated the importance of all Board members using their city email accounts for Board-related communications. Mr. Vaughan recommended using blind carbon copy (BCC) for group emails so that recipients can only reply to the sender, preventing the creation of group email threads that could be subject to FOIA. For collaborative work, members should use their city email or Microsoft Teams.

Community Outreach:

- Dr. Dobson reported on his experience participating in a CPD community walk and recommended that the Board have a representative attend at least one walk per week. He described the walks as essentially canvassing, officers going door to door in

neighborhoods asking residents about any concerns, which aligns with the Board's community engagement goals.

- Dr. Dobson suggested that Board members attending walks could introduce themselves separately from the officers and ask residents about their experiences with policing, potentially using a standard script or question.
- Mr. LaFave raised concern about the optics of Board members accompanying police on community walks, noting it could appear that the Board and the police department are too closely aligned, which could undermine the Board's role as an independent oversight body. Several Board members acknowledged this tension.
- Dr. Dobson responded that Board members could be explicit about their independent role, explaining their presence as observing police activities and giving residents an opportunity to share feedback directly with the oversight board.
- Mr. Walker shared that Sergeant Thomas distributes a weekly email with community walk and event schedules, which he would forward to the Board. This week's activities included a community walk at Midway Manor, engagement at the Boys and Girls Club, a literacy night at Kindewood Apartments, and a public community statistics presentation at Trailblazer Elementary focused on the north district.
- Dr. Fracher expressed interest in conducting focus groups as an outreach method and noted he is awaiting an opinion from the City Attorney's Office on whether budget funds can be used to purchase gift cards as incentives for focus group participation.
- Discussion occurred regarding potential outreach to Point Church on Ridge Street, which was described as having a diverse congregation and active community outreach programs. The Board also discussed establishing contact with the Charlottesville Justice Coalition, which had recently hosted a presentation.
- Mr. Walker reviewed the Board's outreach plan and work plan documents, including the community directory for tracking organizational contacts, a community survey accessible via QR code, and the one-page overview of the Board's monthly process cycle: listen to the community, compile information, do the work (policy review, case review, community engagement), and share findings with the Chief, City Council, City Manager, and the public.
- Dr. Fracher raised the challenge of media and communications, noting the lack of strong local media coverage. The Board discussed options including press releases through the city's system, the Board's website, a potential story with C-VILLE Weekly once the ordinance revisions are complete, and the possibility of social media. Mr. Walker cautioned that social media accounts require significant management effort and may have legal implications.

Work Assignments:

- **Ordinance Revisions:** Mr. Walker, Dr. Fracher, and Mr. LaFave. Mr. Walker to prepare proposed revisions for small group review, then distribute to the full Board for feedback.

- **Community Outreach:** Mr. LaFave and Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly expressed interest in outreach to faith communities and media contacts. Mr. Walker to coordinate outreach efforts. Mr. Frye also expressed interest in community outreach through his spouse's connections with the Democratic Party and neighborhood associations.
- **CPD Policy Review:** Dr. Dobson and Mrs. Reaves volunteered to review CPD's duty to intervene policy and de-escalation policy, noting particular relevance to current events regarding immigration enforcement. Mr. Frye volunteered to conduct a broad review of CPD policies and report back to the group with questions. Mr. Walker to distribute a link to CPD policies to all Board members.
- **School Resource Officers (SROs):** The Board discussed the SRO Memorandum of Understanding between the city and schools, noting its vague language and the complex history of SROs in Charlottesville. The Board agreed to defer substantive work on this issue, as SROs are not expected to be in place until fall at the earliest. Dr. Dobson will continue relationship-building efforts with school administration through coordination with Lieutenant Greg Wade.
- **Glossary of Terms:** Mr. Vaughan and Dr. Dobson to continue developing the glossary document, which aims to define both acronyms and substantive terms used by the Board.
- **Ride-Alongs:** Mr. Walker encouraged Board members to sign up for ride-alongs with CPD using the form previously distributed, coordinating dates through Sergeant Thomas.

Adjournment:

- A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Frye and seconded by Mr. LaFave. The motion was approved unanimously by all members present.
- Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:08 p.m.

Motion: LaFave
 Second: Frye
 Approved Unanimously

Certified by James Walker, Acting PCOB Director

Date Adopted: 4/9/2026

Certified: 