

CHARLOTTESVILLE POLICE CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT BOARD
SPECIAL WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES

Date: April 27, 2026

Scheduled Time: 5:30 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), George Dillard Jr., Andrew Frye, Albe LaFave, Caron LeNoir-Kelly, Nathalie Reaves, Ruairi Vaughan.

Board Members Not Attending: N/A

Staff Present: James Walker, Acting Director.

Guests: N/A

Call to Order:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:38 p.m. by Chair Dr. Fracher. Dr. Fracher reviewed the ground rules for meeting participation, including respectful conduct, the three-minute time limit for public comment, and the process for submitting written questions to the Office at pcob@charlottesville.gov.
- Mr. Walker called the roll. All eight Board members were present, constituting a full Board.

Approval of Agenda:

- A motion was made by Mr. Frye to approve the special work session agenda for April 27, 2026. Motion seconded by Mr. LaFave and approved unanimously by members present.

Announcements:

- Mr. Walker highlighted three upcoming dates: (1) the next regular Board meeting on Thursday, May 14, 2026 at CitySpace at 6:30 p.m.; (2) a joint work session with City Council on Monday, May 18, 2026 in Council Chambers at 4:00 p.m.; and (3) the next CPD CompStat meeting on Thursday, May 14, 2026 at CitySpace at 9:00 a.m.
- Mr. Walker explained that the May 14, 2026 regular Board meeting would focus heavily on the ordinance revisions, with the goal of a final Board vote that evening to approve the version to be recommended at the May 18, 2026 joint session with City Council. He noted that attorneys would still be reviewing the document and minor modifications may follow, but the Board's endorsement of the proposed direction would allow the process to move forward.
- Dr. Fracher emphasized the importance of full Board attendance at the May 18, 2026 City Council work session as a demonstration of solidarity and unified Board purpose. He acknowledged the scheduling difficulty for working members but encouraged all members to make every effort to be present.

Public Comment (First Period):

- No public comment was received. No members of the public were present.

Board Connections:

- Dr. Fracher and Mr. Walker introduced an icebreaker exercise (“Two Truths and a Lie”) in which each Board member wrote three statements about themselves for the group to guess both authorship and identify the false statement. The exercise was undertaken to help Board members become better acquainted as a full eight-member body.
- Following the icebreaker, Dr. Fracher and Mr. Walker invited each Board member to share their reasons for joining the PCOB and what they seek to accomplish in the role.
- Mr. Vaughan stated that he cares deeply about his community and joined the Board to contribute to community safety and well-being, viewing service on the PCOB as a meaningful way to serve.
- Mr. Frye shared that he has had a longstanding interest in how law enforcement works, including taking law enforcement courses approximately thirty years ago, and that he encounters law enforcement through his work. He also noted the practical fit of the Board’s 6:30 p.m. meeting time with his work schedule and described his service as an additional contribution to the community.
- Dr. Fracher, who has served the longest of the current Board, described how his involvement grew out of consulting work he provided to front-line officers prior to the 2017 Unite the Right rally, focused on stress management. That experience gave him insight into the demands and responsibilities placed on officers and motivated him to help make the Department the best it could be.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly recalled hearing the song “Who’s Watching the Watcher?” by Patti LaBelle when she first saw a news report about the PCOB. She described looking for a way to serve her community that would be meaningful and collaborative, with deep respect for the community. She noted her background as a journalist, her father’s career in politics, and her arrival in Charlottesville just before COVID, expressing that the PCOB offered an opportunity to use her skills, get to know residents, and demonstrate that the Board exists to serve.
- Mr. Dillard recounted that he had no prior interest in serving on the Board, but was recruited by the then-Mayor following testimony he gave in Circuit Court that the presiding judge praised for its honesty. He drew on his own background in law enforcement, observing that he had seen things on the street he was not comfortable with, and stated that he serves because he wants every member of the community to be treated fairly.
- Mrs. Reaves stated that she did not initially know she was eligible to apply for the Board. She described hearing many community complaints about police interactions without seeing resolution, including recent concerns surrounding the Tom Tom Festival. She expressed a commitment to fairness, indicating she is neither for nor against the police, and a willingness to act as a devil’s advocate to ensure both sides of an issue are considered.

- Mr. LaFave described his background in some form of law enforcement throughout his career, beginning as a probation officer and later working as a litigation specialist in the Public Defender's Office. He was originally recruited for the Board by former City Council members, but was ineligible at the time as an Albemarle County resident; he became eligible following a change to the eligibility rules. He stated that policing is a hard job and that officers deserve to be heard, while also acknowledging that he has observed both excellent and poor police work.
- Dr. Dobson described his motivation as a desire to serve and to get to know the Charlottesville community beyond his own socioeconomic circle, in order to better understand the lived experiences of residents in communities different from his own.
- Mr. Walker summarized recurring themes from the introductions, noting that the word "community" came up most often, alongside service, well-being, fairness, objectivity, resolution of issues, and respect.
- Dr. Fracher added that his service has been an education in the lived realities of residents in low-income and historically marginalized neighborhoods, and stated that he believes much of white Charlottesville does not fully appreciate the challenges faced by Black and Brown residents in lower-income parts of the City. He encouraged members to participate in community walks with the Chief of Police as an opportunity to meet residents and hear their experiences directly.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly noted that police officers are themselves members of the community but are not always perceived that way and emphasized the importance of recognizing that dimension.
- Mr. Dillard reflected on growing up in the area, describing how the neighborhood and the level of police activity there have changed significantly over time. He also recounted his early career walking a beat in the Prospect Avenue area, emphasizing that consistent presence, conversation, and earning respect were the foundation of effective community policing in his experience.
- When asked what members hope to achieve collectively, Mr. Frye offered the analogy that the Board's goal might be to act as "sandpaper" smoothing out rough spots in the relationship between the police and the community.
- Mr. Dillard expressed optimism that with eight members now seated and engaged, the Board has the capacity to make a meaningful difference, provided members remain committed and do not give up.
- Dr. Fracher noted that the Board's strength lies in its diversity of age, race, gender, education, professional background, and lived experience and expressed gratitude for the composition of the current Board.

Defining the Board's Purpose and Mission:

- Mr. Walker reviewed the five core pathways through which the Board is authorized to operate, as reflected on the agenda: (1) case, incident, systems, and data review; (2) policy, practice, and procedure review; (3) community outreach and engagement; (4) internal PCOB processes and policy; and (5) engagement with CPD.

- Mr. Walker provided an update on recent state legislative developments. The Governor signed House Bill 1476, which is specific to oversight entities formed under Virginia law and which permits oversight boards to convene in closed session for specific purposes. Mr. Walker noted the legislation also opens access to juvenile records, which may be significant for matters involving School Resource Officers (SROs).
- Dr. Dobson stated that the Board has a significant opportunity to provide reassurance and accountability in moments when community members feel powerless, such as concerns surrounding police presence in schools, the use of technology, or other points of community tension. He emphasized that the Board's task is to look closely not only at police behavior and policy but also at accountability, and to make sure community concerns are heard and acted upon.
- Dr. Dobson also stated that the PCOB has trust-building work of its own to do, and that the most effective way to build that trust is through credibility, consistency, and showing up to do the work.
- Significant discussion occurred regarding the School Resource Officer (SRO) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the recent community conversation surrounding SRO placement at Charlottesville High School. Mr. Dillard stated his view that the presence of officers in schools serves an important function, both as a deterrent and as a known, trusted presence for students.
- Dr. Fracher noted that the SRO MOU is vague in important respects, including the procedures applicable when an SRO uses force on a student and a parent files a complaint. He indicated he had sent a letter to the School Board communicating that the PCOB takes no position on whether SROs should be placed in schools but will provide oversight if incidents arise.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly recounted attending a community meeting on the SRO question with her daughter, who is graduating, and who spoke during public comment to say that students themselves had not been consulted. Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity in how police interactions are viewed and discussed the different conversations she has had to have with her daughters about interactions with police.
- Dr. Dobson stated that the Board's role with respect to SROs is not to take a position on whether they should be present, but to ensure that officers operating under the MOU are performing their duties consistent with its intent, building relationships with students, exercising judgment appropriately, and not stepping into matters that should be handled by school administrators. He emphasized that the Board's task is to ensure the high standards expected by the community are met in practice, not only on paper.
- Mr. Dillard provided historical context regarding policing in Charlottesville, including longstanding community concerns about the Charlottesville Police Department in earlier decades. He noted that some current attitudes within the community reflect intergenerational experience, and stated that significant work remains to address that history. He also recounted a recent personal incident in which Charlottesville Police officers responded professionally and respectfully to a situation in which he was involved.

- Mr. Dillard reported that he had asked Charlottesville City Schools Superintendent Dr. Royal Gurley Jr. about the SRO question at a recent NAACP meeting and felt he did not receive a clear response.
- Dr. Dobson stated that he would like to see the Board's inbox of community concerns be more active, not because he wishes for community concern, but because he believes the concerns exist and that the community does not yet trust the Board enough to bring them forward. He identified the development of clear, accessible channels for community input as a priority.
- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly stated that she is preparing a digital and social media engagement plan, noting that many community members, particularly younger residents, consume information through their phones rather than through traditional channels.
- Mrs. Reaves asked whether the Board may consider concerns raised informally (for example, on social media) in addition to formal complaints. Mr. Walker confirmed that the Board may proactively reach out to individuals raising concerns to invite further conversation, while noting that whether a person chooses to file a formal complaint is a separate matter.
- Members discussed several specific community concerns raised informally, including a reported incident involving a DJ during the Tom Tom Festival, complaints about disparities in police presence at events associated with different demographic groups, and the upcoming proms of Charlottesville High School and Western Albemarle High School. Mr. Dillard indicated he would observe the Charlottesville High School prom on May 3, 2026. Mr. Walker noted that, where specific names or personal information are involved, the Board must exercise caution in open meeting and that the closed-session authority taking effect July 1 will allow for more substantive review of such matters.

Messaging for Ordinance Revisions:

- Mr. Walker reported that he has continued line-by-line refinement of the ordinance revision draft, addressing fine details such as consistency between "will" and "shall," internal cross-references, and similar matters, before the document is reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.
- Mr. Walker indicated he would distribute to all Board members both a redlined version showing proposed strikes and additions and a clean version reflecting how the ordinance would read if adopted as recommended. He requested that any Board member feedback be returned to him before the May 14, 2026 meeting so that all comments can be considered together.
- Mr. Walker described the format of the May 18, 2026 City Council work session presentation as a high-level, bullet-point overview of the recommended changes. He noted that the work session is scheduled for one hour or less and indicated the possibility of two-on-one meetings with individual Councilors in the lead-up, should Council request a deeper dive on particular questions.
- Dr. Fracher stated that the overarching message to Council should be that the proposed revisions request "more oversight, not less," and that they are aimed at removing barriers that have prevented the Board from carrying out the work it was originally created to do. He noted that aspirational language in the original ordinance, while well-

intentioned, was not fully vetted at the time of adoption and includes provisions that are not legally workable.

- Dr. Fracher reiterated his request that as many Board members as possible attend the May 18, 2026 work session in person, both to demonstrate unity and to ensure Council has the opportunity to see the full Board engaged.
- Mr. Walker confirmed that, following the May 18, 2026 work session, the Board would consider additional community engagement opportunities for the summer and early fall, with the intention of beginning more substantive case and incident review work in closed session once the new state law takes effect July 1, 2026.

Open Discussion:

- Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly mentioned an upcoming Healthy Streets, Healthy People community event scheduled for Saturday, May 30, 2026 at Washington Park, as a potential opportunity for PCOB representation and distribution of outreach materials. Members discussed the possibility of staffing a table at the event.
- Mr. Dillard expressed appreciation for the engagement of the current full Board and indicated that the increased cohesion and momentum of the body had renewed his own enthusiasm for the work.

Public Comment (Second Period):

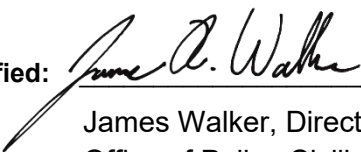
- No public comment was received.

Adjournment:

- A motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. LeNoir-Kelly and seconded by Mr. LaFave. The motion was approved unanimously by all members present.
- Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:11 p.m.

Motion made by Mr. Frye to approve the April 27, 2026 special board work session minutes, seconded by Mr. LaFave.

Approved by the Charlottesville Police Civilian Oversight Board on the 14th day of May, 2026.

Certified: 
James Walker, Director
Office of Police Civilian Oversight
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	Yes	No
Fracher	<u>X</u>	_____
Dobson	_____	Absent
Frye	<u>X</u>	_____
LaFave	<u>X</u>	_____
LeNoir-Kelly	<u>X</u>	_____
Reaves	<u>X</u>	_____
Vaughan	<u>X</u>	_____

Note: The law enforcement seat, currently held by Mr. Dillard, is specifically designated as a non-voting member. The seat is intended to provide the Board with an advisory perspective and expertise from law enforcement experience.