

Questionnaire for Board of Police Commissioners Candidates

Dear candidates, thank you for your commitment to public service. Because we have just three questions, we ask that you carefully consider the context provided in making your response.

* Required

Your full name, as you would like it to appear on the posted questionnaire. *

TOPIC 1: CIVILIAN COMPLAINTS. The Office of the Chief Investigator, which is responsible for investigating citizen complaints against police officers, stated in 2015 that almost half of all allegations had no conclusive dispositions because of insufficient evidence ("not sustained"). In addition, because each case is broken down into multiple allegations that are individually investigated, the rate of citizen complaints that include a "sustained" allegation (reported action occurred and violated department policy) appears artificially lower. In the Office of the Chief Investigator's 2015 Annual Report chart below, 215 allegations were sustained out of 2129 total (10%) - but 1,119 citizen complaints were filed, meaning that 19% of complaints resulted in a "sustained" allegation.

Chart C

2015 OCI CCR ALLEGATIONS & FINDINGS						
ALLEGATION	ADM/CLOSURE	EXONERATED	NOT SUSTAINED	SUSTAINED	UNFOUNDED	TOTAL
Arrest	8	39	0	3	10	60
Demeanor	31	17	387	77	81	593
Entry	8	13	13	1	4	39
Force	23	12	108	3	33	179
Harassment	28	0	15	1	28	72
Procedure	126	217	244	109	128	824
Property	27	14	40	2	8	91
Search	12	31	32	4	7	86
Service	54	38	41	15	37	185
TOTAL	317	381	880	215	336	2129

QUESTION 1: What policies will you champion to provide citizens with a greater confidence that their complaints are taken seriously and result in policy and behavior changes in the department that improve community relations? *

The number of incidents for which an allegation was sustained should be shown in addition to the statistics in the sample chart given above.

I would let residents speak their minds at Commissioner Meetings.

Have a chart of the investigation's progress online, to allow residents to see the progress of the investigation.

When necessary an identifying number could be used in place of a person's name, to protect privacy.

Any presentation of data that is designed to give the public a clear picture, of how well complaints are being resolved, must be clearly explained in plain English so that lay-persons can understand it.

Inform complainants of disciplinary action when it happens.
If there is a critical loss of data or evidence, clearly explain to the complainant how it was lost.

TOPIC 2: OFFICER-INVOLVED CIVILIAN DEATHS. There have been prominent cases both in Detroit and elsewhere where officers involved in civilian deaths were found to have had a history of excessive force or in some cases, had been fired from previous jobs at other departments.



QUESTION 2: How would you ensure that problem officers are appropriately disciplined and/or kept off Detroit's Police Department? *

A thorough background check should be performed on all applicants prior to hiring. If their work history includes prior employment as law enforcement officers, then we must require full disclosure of the incidents and reserve the right to review the findings of previous investigations. Some legislative remedies have been proposed like House Bill 4827, but we don't need to wait for changes in state law if the human resources department can do the research that is needed.

Judgements must start with the premise that actions that are not acceptable by civilians are no more acceptable by police officers. If an exception to this principal is to be applied then an exceptional basis for this deviation must be justified in each case, and not taken for granted.

Deadly force should only be used when there is an imminent threat to human life. A similar standard should apply to high risk actions that are also potentially lethal like high speed chases, no knock raids, Taser use, and pet shootings. These high-risk practices should never be used to handle non-aggressive infractions.

The number of civilian deaths is an important clue, but it doesn't tell the full story. If an officer had to use fatal force to save an innocent or himself, then it was acceptable, even if this happened more than once. On the other-hand, even one unjustifiable death is one too many and should be regarded as a homicide. In cases where there appears to be a pattern of borderline cases, where evidence of wrongdoing is absent, but evidence of justification is also absent, we must err on the side of safety and steer clear of hiring these individuals. Detroit isn't a dumping ground for officers that other departments won't hire.

Other violent conduct can be a strong indicator of homicidal tendencies even when no human beings are killed. Some officers have repeatedly killed dogs who had the misfortune of being at homes they decided to raid. Killing innocents, to arrest people for non-violent infractions, is not rational or moral. The people of Detroit can't feel safe while people who do this needlessly remain on the force. The Board of Police Commissioners is the last line of defense for people who have been the victims of the abuse of power by those who have the power to abuse. I pledge to do everything in my power to bring an end to this carnage, before this behavior escalates to include other family members.

TOPIC 3: POLICY REVIEW. The role of the Board of Police Commissioners is to provide civilian oversight over the Police Department and represent the interests of the public. For example, the BOPC meets in public to discuss and review proposed department changes – three policy proposals currently under review include body-worn cameras, vehicular pursuit, and civil asset forfeiture.



Series 300 Support Services	Effective Date	Review Date Annually	Directive Number 304.6
Chapter 304 - Training			
Reviewing Office			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Directive <input type="checkbox"/> Revised
References			

BODY WORN CAMERAS

304.6-1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines and procedures governing the use of body-worn camera (BWC) systems by department members and the preservation of the digital media created by such equipment.

304.6-2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Detroit Police Department to increase officer security, protect the department from unwarranted citizen complaints, and ensure exceptional police service by members of the Detroit Police Department by using BWC systems to securely record policing activities on video/audio media. The use of body-worn cameras does not replace the requirement to provide thorough written documentation of an incident. All data, images, video and metadata captured, recorded or otherwise produced is the property of the Detroit Police Department and is subject to State and Local law and City policies regarding retention of records.

QUESTION 3: How will you ensure robust public awareness of and input in proposed policy changes at the Detroit Police Department?

Unless the need to change policy is exceptionally urgent, a vote on it should be delayed for two weeks. The meeting following the one where the proposed policy is announced would have discussion of the change on the agenda. Spokespersons with different views on the proposed change would have speaking time as part of that agenda, and topic-specific comments and questions from the audience would be welcome. General comments from the audience would still be at the end of the meeting. Those unable to attend the meeting could submit comments on the policy in writing. Commissioners would then have a week decide on the policy, and put any amendments in writing that resulted from the aforementioned discussion.

In cases of exceptional urgency, a tentative policy could go into effect right away, but the aforementioned process would still be initiated, and the policy decided on by this process would be the one that would supersede the tentative one.

Policy discussions should be announced in a news release.

The website should be more transparent. Links to minutes, videos and announcement of future meetings should be directly on the Board of Police Commissioners page. Currently they can be found under “Boards” or “Calendar and Events.” If the meetings are in the community, the specific venue should be listed and not just which precinct it’s to be held in.

Regarding those policies... I support body worn cameras. Contracts should be awarded on the basis of competitive bidding and quality comparisons. However, there is still the possibility that they won’t be recording when an incident occurs, so such loss of evidence needs to be taken very seriously and the fact that evidence was lost must be taken into consideration when ruling on a complaint. Any deliberate loss of video should be treated as obstruction of justice. As an additional way to guard against such losses of evidence, it is important that the right of civilians to record interactions with police be protected, and any interference with the exercise of this right be treated as obstruction of justice.

Vehicular pursuit choices must be grounded in a commitment to safety first. There are strategies, like setting up temporary roadblocks, to minimize the need for officers to engage in hazardous driving. If such a pursuit escalates to the level of a “high speed chase” the chase should be aborted, except under certain circumstances. If aborting the chase is even more dangerous than continuing, then it may be justified. This would need to involve an imminent threat to human life.

Civil asset forfeiture should be limited to cases where assets to be taken are critical evidence of a crime against persons or their property, or are believed to be obtained by such crimes. If the people from whom the assets are seized are exonerated, the assets should be returned to the defendants. If the property is damaged, exonerated defendants should be compensated for lost value. If there is a conviction, then some portion of the seized assets should be used to restore the victims of the crime from which they were obtained. Civil asset forfeiture should never be used as a tactic for impairing a defendant’s ability to pay for a legal defense.