



December 16, 2023

President Anthony Driver, Jr.
Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability
2 N. LaSalle, Suite 725
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: Priorities for the Commission Proposed by District Council Members at the 2023 Annual Meeting

Dear President Driver,

Section 2-80-070(e)(4) of the Chicago Municipal Code says that each District Council shall “[d]elegate one or more District Council members to attend annual meetings with representatives from each District Council to propose priorities for the Commission.” Pursuant to this provision, delegates of the District Councils met on December 16, 2023 for their Annual Meeting to propose the following priorities:

- 1. Work with Superintendent Snelling to establish basic standards for communications and meetings between District Command staff and the District Councils and ensure that the Superintendent enforces those standards.**
- 2. Set a goal for Superintendent Snelling to reduce 911 response times in an equitable manner.**
- 3. Direct CCPSA staff to develop a public relations and education campaign with support from District Councils that highlights their role in public safety and police accountability.**
- 4. Focus the Commission’s attention and resources on its responsibility to help to bring the City into compliance with the Consent Decree as soon as is practicable, per Section 2-80-030(10) of the Chicago Municipal Code.**
- 5. Set a goal for Superintendent Snelling to follow through on and implement its plans for a workforce allocation study that engages the Commission and District Councils.**

District Council members arrived at these priorities through in-depth discussions and thoughtful deliberation. At the District Councils’ Quarterly Meeting on November 5, 2023, attendees identified an initial list of priorities for consideration. A group of District Council members then volunteered to meet each week to further refine and develop the list. Through direct outreach, surveys, and listening sessions, at least one member of every District Council participated in developing the list. After further refinement, District Council members ranked the priorities in order of importance. Seventy-eight percent of District Council members provided rankings. Through the rankings, District Council members identified five priorities with especially strong support.

The final list reflects various considerations: the greatest concerns of District Council members’ respective constituencies and communities, the highest needs for the District Councils to effectively achieve their purposes, the timeliest issues in public safety and police accountability that require attention from the Commission, and recommendations from District Council members for crafting 2024 goals for the Superintendent of the Police Department.

Below are descriptions for each of the proposed priorities, including initial action items and desired outcomes for 2024:

1. Work with Superintendent Snelling to establish basic standards for communications and meetings between District Command staff and the District Councils and ensure that the Superintendent enforces those standards.

The two-way relationships built between District Councils and police will naturally vary from district to district and depend on the unique needs and interests of local communities. All District Councils, however, will benefit from the creation of minimum guidelines to enable the District Councils to achieve their purposes and open the door to improvements in public safety and police accountability. The Superintendent should establish a set of standards on meetings with District Council members, attendance at regular District Council meetings, responsiveness to inquiries, access to data, attendance at roll calls, public safety crisis communications, and conflict resolution. The standards should also provide guidelines for communications between District Councils and Area leadership.

The District Council members recommend as a first step that the Commission work with District Councils and Superintendent Snelling to assess the state of relationships between District Councils and District Command staff in each district. The assessment should include an opportunity for police leadership to weigh in on prospects for productive relationship-building. The desired results are the development and implementation of a protocol and the periodic review of outcomes.

2. Set a goal for Superintendent Snelling to reduce 911 response times in an equitable manner.

Available data shows that officer response times to priority 911 calls lagged behind the times in other major cities. Even more concerning, the response times varied widely from district to district, with particularly prolonged response times in Black and Brown communities. As President Driver stated in his cover letter to the 2024 report on the CPD budget, “your zip code should not determine your worthiness when you call for help.”

District Council members call for the Commission to set a goal for the Superintendent on improving response times using an evidence-based and community-informed approach that prioritizes data transparency, community input, and efficacious resource allocation. Beyond setting this goal, the Commission should consider holding a hearing on the issue of response times, look into policy opportunities, and take other steps to work with District Councils to generate comments from constituents across the city. The ultimate goal is to achieve citywide improvements in response times, particularly in neighborhoods facing disproportionately delayed police responses.

3. Direct CCPSA staff to develop a public relations and education campaign with support from District Councils that highlights their role in public safety and police accountability.

One of the greatest challenges facing the inaugural class of District Councils is the lack of public awareness of their existence, their roles, and their meetings. The District Councils represent the bedrock of the new accountability system, ensuring that the Community Commission is created by and responsive to communities. The potential for grassroots-driven public safety and accountability work is historic but largely untapped. More public understanding of and involvement in the work of District Councils will benefit the entire system.

The public relations and education campaign should incorporate, as a first step, a district-by-district assessment of marketing needs and outreach opportunities. Based on this assessment, CCPSA staff should explore contracting with an outside firm for consultation and marketing support. The campaign should include citywide and targeted strategies to boost awareness and engagement, as well as localized toolkits for District Councils to use. Each District Council may need a tailored approach; each District Council stands to benefit from improvements. The desired result is a concrete, measurable, and achievable plan, regular data gathering to track progress, and clear progress in public awareness, open meeting attendance, and community engagement in the work of District Councils in all twenty-two districts.

4. Focus the Commission’s attention and resources on its responsibility to help to bring the City into compliance with the Consent Decree as soon as is practicable, per Section 2-80-030(10) of the Chicago Municipal Code.

Like the CCPSA Ordinance, the Consent Decree represents a monumental opportunity to re- envision how policing works in Chicago and how we achieve true public safety throughout the city. However, after half a decade, the City still remains far off from operational compliance with the Decree’s many stipulations. District Council members recognize the immense challenge that comes with seeking compliance and the hard ongoing work on many fronts to attain compliance with the Decree. There is an unrealized opportunity for the Commission to work with the City, the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, and the Consent Decree Monitoring Team to bring more progress.

District Council members recommend as first steps that Commissioners and District Council members hold a meeting with the Consent Decree Monitor to discuss the current state of progress with the Decree, identify opportunities for collaboration from CCPSA, and conduct an inventory of key provisions of the Decree where the Commission and District Councils can train attention and efforts. The approach should also incorporate education to the public on the Consent Decree, including a potential hearing on the subject. The desired result is a strategic plan from the Commission on advancing Consent Decree compliance in 2024 and report-outs to the District Councils and the public detailing the Commission’s efforts, the outcomes of those efforts, and overall progress in Consent Decree compliance in the next two reporting periods of 2024.

5. Set a goal for Superintendent Snelling to follow through on and implement plans for a workforce allocation study that engages the Commission and District Councils.

Few things could be as critical to achieving improved public safety as improving how the Police Department allocates its officers. Superintendent Snelling has signaled that work is underway to commission a new study on how to devise an effective, evidence-based workforce allocation plan. It is imperative that the Commission uses its goal-setting authority to hold Superintendent Snelling accountable.

District Council members recommend that the Superintendent ensure that the study will provide opportunities for the Commission and the District Councils to play a role as stakeholders and as channels for public oversight on the study’s features, the study’s progress, and the ultimate design of an allocation plan. Desired results include the establishment of goals, a plan for tracking progress on the goals, and planning meetings with the District Councils on how to educate, hear from, and include communities in the process of developing the plan. Desired results also include establishing an annual workforce assessment plan with support from the Commission and District Councils.

These five priorities are only a portion of the many important issues the District Councils identified for the Commission, but they represent the collective wisdom from the District Council members on how to best advance the CCPSA mission in the upcoming year. The District Council members welcome more conversation with the Commission over these and other priorities, how to develop plans of action, and how to achieve the intended outcomes.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, the undersigned:

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