



January 15, 2021

Honorable Mayor Treece and Honorable Members of the City Council:

The Citizens Police Review Board met on January 13, 2021. During its meeting, the Board passed two motions with special requests for the Council to consider. In order to promote transparency, accountability and trust, the Board is requesting that the meetings of the Citizens Police Review Board be televised on the City Channel. In addition, the Board is requesting that Council consider an amendment to Section 21-46 of the City of Columbia Code of Ordinances in order to allow board members to be candidates for public office.

Request that the Citizens Police Review Board Meetings Be Televised

During its January 13, 2021 meeting, the Board unanimously passed a motion to send a report to the City Council to request the meetings of the Citizens Police Review Board be broadcast by the City Channel. The Board believes that televising the CPRB meetings will increase public trust in both the police, the Board, and the civilian oversight process.

When the Board was originally formed over ten years ago, the meetings of the CPRB were broadcast by the City Channel. In October of 2013, the Board on a vote of 7 to 2 requested that Council direct staff to discontinue televising the meetings. The rationale cited in the 2013 report was that televising the meetings may make complainants feel uncomfortable, that it was an unnecessary expense, and that the Board preferred to meet in a less formal setting than the Council Chambers. At that time, Dr. Kennett and Dr. Martin dissented because they felt it was important for members of the public to be able to watch the meetings on the city channel. The current board concurs with the views of Dr. Kennett and Dr. Martin. Since 2013, members of the public have at different points requested that the Board meetings be televised. In response to some public requests for additional transparency, the Board, in 2019, began using a certified court reporter to prepare transcripts of the meetings and those transcripts are placed on the City's website at: <https://www.como.gov/law/citizens-police-review-board-meeting-transcripts/>. Recently, members of the public have again requested that the meetings be televised, broadcast, or otherwise live streamed.

The Board believes that televising the board meetings is important for transparency, accountability and trust. In addition, televising the meetings while the city is experiencing the COVID-19 public health emergency is also important to allow the public to be engaged in civilian oversight in a healthy way.

Proposed Change to Section 21-46(c)

The Board also passed a motion to recommend a change to Section 21-46(c). Section 21-46(c) in pertinent part, states: "...Board members may not be employed by the city, be a party to any pending litigation against the city, be an elected public office holder, or be a candidate for elected public office..." A majority of the Board voted to send a report to the City Council to recommend that Section 21-46(c) be

amended to remove the wording that states: "or be a candidate for elected public office." In its discussion the Board thought that the change was necessary so as to not discourage members from running for office. At the meeting, Board member Andrew Fisher mentioned that a prior member had to resign from the Board when that member announced his candidacy for Boone Hospital Board of Trustees. Wayne Boykin, Cornellia Williams, Catherine Grover, Andrew Fisher, and Heather Heckman-McKenna voted in favor of the motion and Carley Gomez abstained from the vote.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Board respectfully request that the City Council consider the Board's requests. If Council supports televising the Citizens Police Review Board meeting, the Board respectfully requests that Council pass a motion to direct staff to begin televising the meetings of the Citizens Police Review Board. If Council supports the Board's proposal to remove the restrictions on membership related to candidates for public office, the Board respectfully requests Council pass a motion to direct staff to draft the legislation.

We sincerely appreciate your thoughtful consideration of our requests and look forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Sincerely,



Travis Pringle, Chair



Cornellia Williams, Vice Chair