

MINUTES – Duluth Citizen Review Board Meeting of December 14th, 2021

In attendance: Sara Vaccarella (Chair), Kevin Wu (Board Member), Eric Franklin (Board Member), Ken Kimber (Board Member), John Beyer (Board Member), Carl Crawford (Human Rights Officer), Laura Laaksonen (Human Rights Assistant), Blair Powless (Board Secretary), Mike Ceynowa (DPD Lieutenant/DCRB Police Liaison), Laura Marquardt (DPD Deputy Chief)

Absent: Danelle Dunphy (Vice Chair)

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

III. Public Comments – via WebEx and submitted in writing

No public comment

IV. Police Liaison Report

- No complaint resolutions at this time.
- DPD did notify lieutenants that they need to contact complainants via telephone and to then record whether complainant was satisfied or not, a form letter will be sent to complainants as well

Discussion Surrounding the Reinstatement of Officer Adam Huot to Patrol

- To review the official DPD press release regarding Officer Huot being back on patrol duty see **APPENDIX A**
- Q: Social media post showed Officer Adam Huot on patrol duty. Is he responding to calls?
A: Yes.
- Q: We thought that he had a desk job and not contact with community. Using the social media post to show that Officer Huot is doing good is missing the point when he hasn't taken accountability for his behaviors to the community. How will he regain trust? Has there been discussion of Officer Huot making amends for his past misdeeds?
A: Press release went out. Press release details Officer Huot's journey from time of the incident that got him fired up to now.
- Q: Was the press release created based on reaction to the social media posting, or was the press release created to accompany the social media post.
A: The press release was created in response to inquiries about the social media post.
- The City Human Rights Officer has received calls from members of communities of color expressing their mistrust and concern, and their feeling betrayed. The City Human Rights Officer was not informed of this decision regarding Officer Huot being reinstated to patrol.

- Q: Photograph appears staged to look as though it were taken by the home owner. Was it?
A: Photograph was taken by an employee of the police department
- This appears to be a serious misstep on the part of the department. There should have been public outreach and discussion around the reinstatement of the officer before the officer's reinstatement.
- Q: When was Officer Huot reinstated?
A: December 6, 2021
- Q: When was posting made?
A: December 13, 2021
- This discussion will be continued at next DCRB meeting. An agenda item for this discussion will be created
- This misstep has broken community trust in the DPD and in the Human Rights Office and the DCRB

V. Approval of Minutes

Minutes not completed. Motion to table minutes until next meeting made and seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

VI. Executive Report

Executive committee continues to meet and in particular is looking at how other citizen review boards in our state function (powers and duties, etc.)

VII. Committee Reports

a. Taskforce on Complaint Audit Process

- Openpolice.org comes up when searching for how to file a complaint against the DPD. This is concerning because the link on this site to the DPD is a dead link. This should be rectified. (DPD has reached out to this organization and has received no response so far)
- Complaint form that the DPD has should be reviewed to see that it says what we want it to say
- Individuals who participate in testing DPD complaint system should have clear guidelines on how to conduct test and what information to report back
- This process should verify that individuals' complaints are getting accepted and directed properly
- Complaint form that the DPD has should state that a complainant can contact the DCRB directly via email or by attending a DCRB meeting and making complaint verbally
- Complaint form should also include information on how to contact the Human Rights Office

VIII. Other Business

a. Community Crisis Response update

Services have begun. Contract is still in process of being negotiated. City council approved \$600k tax levy that will be used to fund more crisis response in Duluth.

b. Racial Bias Audit update

Near completion of RFP. Looking at how to assess pedestrian and vehicle stops for racial bias and not sure how that can be accomplished.

c. Update on guest speakers for January meeting

- Plan is to have founding members discuss genesis of DCRB
- Sheryl Boman, Doug Bowen-Bailey and Ricky Defoe have confirmed that they will participate in discussion. Carl Crawford and John Beyer will participate as well.
- Discussion will look at what DCRB was intended to be, what it has become, and what it can become in the future
- Hoping to connect all participants for discussion prior to the discussion at the next DCRB meeting

d. Discuss option to review body cam footage

- DPD Chief Tusken has offered to show the executive committee the body cam footage from the police/citizen interaction that citizen John Staine lodged a formal complaint about
- Executive committee plans to set up a time review the footage with the Chief

IX. Community Correspondence and Announcements

Recognition of people who lost their lives as a result of homelessness will be taking place on the steps of City Hall at 12:00 PM on December 24th

X. Public Comments via WebEx and Board Member Comments

- Citizen attendee stated that they appreciate our work and being able to listen to our discussions
- If people don't like what we are doing or want us to do more please let us know

DCRB Accepting Complaints

- The DCRB needs to consider what our process should be for responding to citizen complaints made directly to DCRB, especially those made in person
- Look at how other CRBs in state do this

XI. Adjournment

APPENDIX A

<https://duluthmn.gov/media/WebSubscriptions/100/20211214-100-6675.pdf>

DATE: 12/14/2021

SUBJECT: Duluth Police release statement on recent social media post

BY: Mattie Hjelseth, Duluth Police Department Public Information Officer

A recent post on social media of Officer Adam Huot shoveling stairs at a home, after he responded to a medical call, generated some community concern about an incident involving him that led to his discipline in May 2017.

Officer Huot was hired as a patrol officer in February 2008. In June 2017, he was placed on leave without pay by the Duluth Police Department after a use of force incident that occurred in the downtown skywalk system.

Officer Huot was reinstated in November 2019 after an arbitrator ruled the police department lacked just cause for termination and ordered he be returned to duty without back pay. Huot was assigned administrative duties at the police department. In September 2020, Officer Huot was transferred from administrative duties to the Financial Crimes Unit. Officer Huot was recently re-assigned to patrol in December 2021.

Officer Huot offered some personal history about his life during the appeals process. A year after the incident occurred, in August 2018, Huot went back to school at the College of St. Scholastica. Officer Huot graduated with his Masters of Social Work in May 2020.

Officer Huot continues to attend trainings, including Implicit Bias and Fair and Impartial Policing, and is helping grow health and wellness initiatives within the department.

“I think it is important to acknowledge that what happened in May 2017 is my own failure. I didn’t show up to work that day and give the City of Duluth, the community, or my Duluth Police partners the best version of myself. I did not give Mr. Houle the patience or empathy he deserved and I failed to see the impact of my actions prior to my split-second decision,” said Officer Adam Huot. “During my time at the College of St. Scholastica I not only learned about effective and evidence-based techniques for therapy and counseling, but also attended courses pertaining to social justice, social welfare policy, and community mental health. This course work cultivated a tremendous amount of time to reflect and realign my values and perspectives. My colleagues and professors throughout my studies challenged me to consider all perspectives and to arrive into any situation with empathy and understanding. I returned to the Duluth Police Department a much better person than when I left it. I hold the negative impacts I have created close to me as a reminder that I can do better. I have worked tirelessly, and will tenaciously continue to support and implement initiatives for positive change surrounding wellness, mental health stigma, and physical wellbeing.”

“The Duluth Police Department recognizes Officer Huot’s actions in May 2017 were unacceptable and betrayed the community’s trust,” said Chief Mike Tusken. “Upon his reinstatement to the department, Officer Huot was presented with clear expectations to regain the public’s trust by being kind, caring, and compassionate in his service to the community. My decision to put Officer Huot back on patrol is based

on my observations of Officer Huot personal and professional growth aligning with our department's values, core beliefs, and mission.”