



# VIRGINIA POLICE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

A Division of Southern States Police Benevolent Association

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Mayor Nikuyah Walker  
605 East Main Street  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Charlottesville, VA 22902  
[nwalker@charlottesville.org](mailto:nwalker@charlottesville.org)

Dear Mayor Walker,

The men and women of the Charlottesville City Police Department are hurting. They are looking around the national and local landscapes and only seeing negative examples and opinions of police work amplified at the expense of the majority in this profession.

Naturally, we would look to our leadership in the department to demonstrate our good works and represent us as police officers to our community. Unfortunately, we have lost faith in the leadership of this department. We have realized that we can no longer rely on the standard procedures that provide due process. There was a time when an investigation or even interviews were a requisite first step before condemnation.

Policing is a complex and highly dynamic line of work. We are trained to face dangerous situations with the knowledge that our community knows that our work is essential to the civil society and understands that force, a last resort in any situation, is sometimes a necessary evil to enforce the law. That balance is now lost; and officers are left wondering whether they have a future in the profession they once loved.

When we have asked the Chief of Police to explain the new rules to our officers, we are met with anger or silence. In most situations, our officers are left to infer the rules in this ever-changing landscape solely on the basis of Department discipline of other officers. Unfortunately, the intricacies of each situation are often unclear and are not explained to younger officers on the street. With that void, a chasm has formed between this department and its appointed leader.

Instead of leadership, we get to learn about the impact of our policing practices with no confounding factors explained. The implication is obvious and offensive to the officers who patrol the streets of Charlottesville City. A leader, especially one who has led this organization for 3 years and been a commander for decades, needs to accept ownership and bring solutions --- not point fingers.

I ask each of you to examine the new life of a police officer in Charlottesville City. Each of them is sitting in their cruiser dreading the next dispatched call because that could be the one where things do not go as planned. A minor mistake, or even a completely lawful, justified action that doesn't have good optics, can be amplified immediately through social media and prosecuted as

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a criminal offense with the backing of a Police Chief who will not wait for context through an investigation. Police work is not a neat and tidy job. There are always rough edges.

Please be thankful that these are not the consequences for you or your family the next time that you make a mistake or misjudge a situation at work.

There is a movement in this country, and now, indeed, this city to reform our police policies, procedures, and tactics. If that is the resolve of the people of Charlottesville City, then it is their right to get the police department that they want. However, I would caution that cultural change requires leadership that is contingent on the relationship of the Chief to the department personnel. They must be willing to follow. That relationship is gone.

The Virginia Police Benevolent Association surveyed its Charlottesville City members regarding their current feeling of job security and satisfaction. Below, I present those results to you. Please note, 65 people completed the survey.

As we move forward through the process of reviewing our practices in line with our community's expectations, I ask that you question whether you have the right Chief of Police to deliver this department through its current crisis and to repair the damage that has been caused.

If you can find time on your schedules, I would like to schedule meetings to discuss this crisis and how it is affecting the CPD. From the officer's perspective, we can offer the true situation that is unfolding at the street level. Please let me know if you have availability to speak with us.

Very Respectfully,



Michael Wells  
President, Central Virginia Chapter  
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MW:clr

“Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. The term “Command Staff” refers to the Chief of Police, Major, and Captains. The term "PCRB" refers to the Police Civilian Review Board.”

**Survey Results:**

**Question 1:** Considering the current national concern about increasing crime and the scrutiny of policing policies and procedures, do you feel the current Chief of Police has the ability to lead the CPD into this new era?

Yes: 9.6%, No: 69.4%, Undecided: 21%

**Question 2:** If you are accused of violating policy, do you believe you will receive a fair administrative process?

Yes: 8.0%, No: 82.3%, Undecided: 9.7%

**Question 3:** Do you believe a well-run PCRB, working in concert with internal affairs, would improve the current administrative process?

Yes: 11.3%, No: 71%, Undecided: 17.7%

**Question 4:** Is a strong PCRB with binding discipline, independent investigative authority, and subpoena power a good alternative to the current administrative process?

Yes: 4.8%, No: 83.9%, Undecided: 11.3%

**Question 5:** Do you believe your actions during an arrest will be honestly reviewed by the current Command Staff?

Yes: 24.2%, No: 54.8% Undecided: 21%

**Question 6:** Has the current political climate in the city caused you to reduce your normal policing activities (traffic stops, arrests, community policing, etc.) for fear of being targeted by community groups?

Yes: 90.2%, No: 4.9%, Undecided: 4.9%

**Question 7:** Have the actions of the Command Staff caused you to reduce your normal policing activities (traffic stops, arrests, community policing, etc.) for fear of being unfairly targeted by CPD leadership?

Yes: 82.3%, No: 9.7%, Undecided: 8.1%

**Question 8:** Do you believe the Command Staff are strong leaders and have the best interests of officers in mind?

Yes: 8.1%, No: 77.4%, Undecided: 14.5%

**Question 9:** Do you believe the Chief of Police has the best interests of the CPD in mind?

Yes: 9.7%, No: 83.9%, Undecided: 6.5%

**Question 10:** Do you feel professionally supported by the Command Staff?

Yes: 12.9%, No: 71%, Undecided: 16.1%

**Question 11:** Is Command Staff open to evaluation and improvement?

Yes: 8.1%, No: 80.6%, Undecided: 11.3%

**Question 12:** Is training at CPD readily available, sufficient in scope, and applicable to your daily duties?

Yes: 22.6%, No: 62.9%, Undecided: 14.5%

**Question 13:** Have you considered other career options because of the additional community pressure and scrutiny put on CPD officers in the past three years?

Yes: 83.9%, No: 8.1%, Undecided: 8.1%

**Question 14:** Has the Chief of Police, in her role as a leader, helped to make you feel more or less secure in your future with the CPD?

I feel LESS secure in my career: 80.6%

I feel MORE secure in my career: 1.6%

The Chief's actions do not affect my feelings of security in my career: 17.7%

**Question 15:** If a friend or relative was interested in a career in Law Enforcement would you:

Tell them to apply to CPD: 8.1%

Tell them to apply to another law enforcement agency: 61.3%

Tell them to consider another profession: 30.6%

**Question 16:** Are the Command Staff and their decisions a major factor in your current feeling about your law enforcement career?

Yes: 74.2%, No: 16.1%, Undecided: 9.7%

**Question 17:** What are the four largest concerns the CPD faces presently?

The 4 most widely cited concerns were:

Lack Trust and Faith in Department Leadership

Unfair Discipline

Low Morale

Pay