

Citizen Complaint Authority
Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 1, 2025

Attendees Present

CCA Board Members

John J. Williams, Chair
Randi Burlew, Vice Chair
Samuel Burbanks, IV.
Sarah Ghee, Member

Attendees Absent

Rosa Cama, Member

Staff

John Kennedy, Director
Dena Brown, Division Manager
David Sturkey, Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department
Andrew Alanis, Investigator
Jessalyn Goodman, Investigator
Ronald Pugh, Investigator
Robert Stephens, Investigator
Arnie Slaughter, Investigator
Kaitlyn Streicher, Investigator
Joseph Vesper, Investigator
Brandon Upchurch, Sr. Administrative Specialist
Steve Sobel, CitiCable General Manager
Tom Potter, CitiCable Production Manager
Darius Jones, CitiCable Programming Manager

Cathy Bailey, Assistant City Manager

David Johnston, Internal Investigation Section
Captain, CPD
Brent McCurley, Internal Investigation Section
Lieutenant, CPD

Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Minutes from Previous Meeting

Member Burbanks, IV. moved and Member Burlew seconded a motion to accept minutes from the November 2025 meeting. (Agree 4 - Oppose 0 - Abstain - 0). **Motion passed.**

Director's Report

Director Kennedy presented the Director's Report to the Board.

The Board was presented with 5 new fully vetted CCA investigation reports; 1 additional new fully vetted CCA investigation report was continued to the next Board meeting at the request of the complainant.

Reduction in the number of investigation reports presented to the Board is to shorten meeting times.

The reports presented highlight a need for officers attentiveness to individuals with mental and physical limitations.

CPD Responses to CCA Recommendations

Recommendation R2509

CCA is concerned about the unprofessional and antagonistic interactions between Officer Bohn and citizens in this encounter and in a previous CCA case. This is the second recommendation for Officer Bohn to receive additional training to better engage with citizens to create more trust between CPD and the citizens of Cincinnati. His previous incident with a different citizen occurred on February 10, 2024 (reference CCA Case 24038). The initial recommendation for Case 24038 comes after the review of Officer Bohn's BWC which showed him being unprofessional and using profane language to address a citizen.

CPD Response – CPD was not present for response.

Recommendation R2510

In this case Officer Bohn and Officer Buckler both unholstered their firearms while seated in their police cruiser in the parking lot of the Shell gas station.

The rules Cincinnati Police Officers must follow regarding the unholstering of a firearm are found CPD Procedure Manual 12.550 Discharging of Firearms, which states (in part):

“At such time as a police officer perceives what he interprets to be a threat of loss of life or serious physical harm to himself or others at the hands of another, he has the authority to display a firearm, with finger outside the trigger guard and have it ready for self-defense. The finger is only to be placed on the trigger when on target and ready to engage a threat.”

Additionally, CPD Manual of Rules and Regulations 1.25 CPD Section One- Failure of Good Behavior states:

“1.25 A. Members of the Department shall only draw or display their firearms in time of demonstrated need or for official inspection. Members shall not use or handle firearms in a careless or imprudent manner.

B. Members shall not use, or handle department issued weapons in a careless or imprudent manner. This rule applies to any department issued weapon except firearms, which are covered under Rule 1.25A.”

In CCA's respective interviews with Officer Bohn and Officer Buckler both disclosed that they had unholstered their firearms while parked in the lot of the Shell gas station when they were approached by Mr. Brown. Both Officer Bohn and Officer Buckler both cited officer safety issues, specifically that at the time Mr. Brown initiated contact with them they were not sure if they were going to be attacked.

Officer Bohn and Officer Buckler's unholstering of their firearms was observed in CCA's review of BWC footage. Further review of the footage showed that both officers unholstered their weapons, with Officer Bohn holding his on his lap with the muzzle pointed at the interior door of the police cruiser and Officer Buckler holding his in a low ready position on his right side while his door was partially opened for the duration for their contact with Mr. Brown at the gas station. The firearms were never pointed at or displayed to Mr. Brown as they were not within his view.

Only CPD Procedure 12.550 Discharging of Firearms and Rules and Regulations 1.25 CPD Section One- Failure of Good Behavior were found to address when an officer can unholster their firearm. Of these two guidelines, only 1.25 CPD Section One- Failure of Good Behavior addresses when an officer is permitted to unholster, or “draw”, their firearm. In this regulation it only states that an officer is permitted to, “draw or display their firearms in time of demonstrated need or for official inspection”. No further clarification is provided.

CCA recommends that CPD Procedure Manual be updated to include when, and under what circumstances an officer may unholster, or “draw”, their firearm. This is not currently addressed in the CPD Procedure Manual which only accounts for the displaying and discharge of a firearm by officers.

Additionally, CCA recommends that CPD Manual of Rules and Regulations 1.25 CPD Section One- Failure of Good Behavior define the term “demonstrated time of need” to reduce ambiguity and clarify for officers the circumstances when they are permitted to unholster their firearms during the course of their duties.

CPD Response – CPD was not present for response.

Recommendation R2511

CCA recommends that Officer Bohn be partnered with a more experienced police officer. In this case, as well as two other recent cases (CCA case #: 24038 and 25103), Officer Bohn was either working by himself, or in this case with a younger officer with less patrol experience. Partnering Officer Bohn with a more experienced Cincinnati Police officer may provide him with guidance for better understanding of CPD Procedure and CPD Rules and Regulations, to make better decisions in the field, and improve his professionalism.

CPD Response – CPD was not present for response.

Recommendation R2512

CCA recommends that Officer Bohn be partnered with a more experienced police officer. In this case, as well as two other recent cases (CCA case #: 24038 and 25103), Officer Bohn was either working by himself, or in this case with a younger officer with less patrol experience. Partnering Officer Bohn with a more experienced Cincinnati Police officer may provide him with guidance for better understanding of CPD Procedure and CPD Rules and Regulations, to make better decisions in the field, and improve his professionalism.

CPD Response – CPD was not present for response.

Recommendation R2513

The case was very complex and included very minimal evidence (no paperwork and no BWC). CPD’s social media policy is vague and antiquated at best and needs to be updated to include specifics on the personal use of social media accounts.

Various police department policies were researched from around the country and a recommendation is being made to update the social media policy (CPD Procedure § 14.205 social media (Revised January 28, 2021)

CCA recommends that the following be added to CPD Procedure § 14.205 social media:

While CPD has some of the following language in their policy CCA recommends the following language:

“Public employees occupy a trusted position in the community, and thus, their statements have the potential to contravene the policies and performance of this department. Due to the nature of the work and influence associated with the law enforcement profession, it is necessary that employees of this department be subject to certain reasonable limitations on their speech and expression. To achieve its mission and efficiently provide service to the public, the Cincinnati Police Department will carefully balance the individual employee's rights against the department's needs and interests when exercising a reasonable degree of control over its employees' speech and expression. Department personnel should always be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are

constantly in flux, and that they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected. Department personnel should always carefully consider the implications of their speech and any other form of expression when using social media. Finally, department personnel forfeit any expectation of privacy with regard to anything published or maintained through file-sharing software or any internet site open to public view.

A. Precautions and Prohibitions

oDepartment personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech and expression does not impair working relationships of this department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair harmony among coworkers, adversely impact the disciplinary process, or cause disruption to the department, or to any other city agency.

oAs public employees, department personnel are cautioned that speech, on- or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties - that is, that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities - is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline. Department personnel should assume that their speech and expression, and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their official capacity and this department.

oDepartment personnel will not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access to as a result of their employment or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this department without written permission from the Chief of Police."

CPD Response – CPD was not present for response.

Recommendation R2514

Definition of Abuse of Authority

At its core, abuse of authority occurs when an officer misuses the powers of their position for personal gain, interest, or advantage. It occurs when an officer uses their official position not for the public good, but for their own benefit. The CPD Manual of Rules and Regulations § 1.13 states: "Members shall not, at any time, use or attempt to use their official position, badge, or credentials for personal or financial gain." Similarly, the CCA has traditionally defined Abuse of Authority as, "Misuse of one's official position, including by (but not limited to) engaging in improperly coercive conduct or by mistreating persons. Such conduct includes misusing one's official position, through coercive behavior or otherwise, in order to obtain personal benefits, even if those benefits have relatively little financial value."

While these definitions provide a general understanding, they lack the specificity needed for more effective evaluation of abuse of authority allegations. Therefore, CCA proposes the following, more precise definition to CPD and the following test:

"Abuse of Authority is the misuse of powers, privileges, or symbols by a CPD employees that extends beyond the scope of their official duties or in a manner not allowed legally, ethically, or by departmental standards to gain personal benefit, regardless of value. This includes for example:

- Preferential treatment for oneself or associates (e.g., avoiding a complaint, using status for discounts or services);
- Coercion, threats, or intimidation relying on the officer's position of power, rather than legal justification;
- Decisions or actions based on personal animus, favoritism, or retaliation;

- Actions that exceed legal boundaries for illegitimate purposes, such as settling personal scores or furthering political agendas.”

This definition provides clarity, flexibility, and a strong ethical foundation. By focusing on personal benefit, it effectively distinguishes abuse of authority from other misconduct such as excessive force or negligence. It encompasses both overt misuse of status and more subtle forms of favoritism or retaliation. Having a shared definition of Abuse of Authority between CCA and IIS also helps establish consistency. This definition aligns with professional ethics and administrative policies, underscoring the principle that officers are entrusted with authority to serve the public, not themselves.

CPD Response – CPD was not present for response.

Public Comment

Chair Williams commented that CPD would not be in attendance and that CCA #24238 will be on next month’s agenda.

Cincinnati Black United Front (CBUF) member and consultant to the City Manager Iris Roley questioned why CPD was not in attendance and how the reduction of the number of investigation presented to the Board each meeting would impact the 90-day mandate.

CBUF member Julie Niesen provided the monthly themes of officer awareness/training concerning people with disabilities and discourtesy to citizens.

Community member Franklin commented on the complaints he filed with CCA.

General Discussion

1. **CCA Case Number 25103:** No updates were available.

New Business

1. **CCA Case Number 25053:** Member Burlew moved and Member Burbanks, IV. seconded a motion to accept CCA’s findings for allegations 1 through 5. (Agree 4 - Oppose 0 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**

Member Burlew moved and Member Burbanks, IV. seconded a motion to accept tabling voting on CCA’s disposition on allegation 6. (Agree 4 - Oppose 0 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**

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2. **CCA Case Number 24193:** Member Burbanks, IV. moved and Member Burlew seconded a motion to accept CCA’s findings and recommendations, if any. (Agree 4 - Oppose 0 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**

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3. **CCA Case Number 25100:** Member Burbanks, IV. moved and Member Ghee seconded a motion to accept CCA’s findings and recommendations. (Agree 4 - Oppose 0 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**

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4. **CCA Case Number 25046:** Member Ghee moved and Member Burbanks, IV. seconded a motion to accept CCA’s findings and recommendations, if any. (Agree 4 - Oppose 0 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**
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5. **CCA Case Number 24190:** Member Burbanks, IV. moved and Member Burlew seconded a motion to accept CCA's findings and recommendations, if any. (Agree 2 - Oppose 2 - Abstain 0). **Motion did not pass.**

Member Burbanks, IV. moved and Member Burlew seconded a motion to adopt updated findings and recommendations line by line, if any. (Agree 4 - Oppose 0 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**

Member Burbanks, IV. moved and Member Burlew seconded a motion accept a sustained finding for allegation 1. (Agree 3 - Oppose 1 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**

Member Burbanks, IV moved and Member Burlew seconded a motion accept a sustained finding for allegation 2. (Agree 2 - Oppose 1 - Abstain 1). **Motion passed.**

Member Burbanks, IV moved and Member Burlew seconded a motion accept CCA's findings for all other allegations. (Agree 3 - Oppose 1 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**

Announcements

Member Burlew requested that CCA #25053 be revisited during general discussion once the associated IIS report is available and CPD is available for disability training questions.

CBUF member and consultant to the City Manager Iris Roley made problem solving recommendations/project proposals to the Board and CCA.

Member Ghee requested that CCA investigate protocols for the number of responding officers.

CBUF member Jennifer Foster requested CCA investigate connecting the Citizen Response Unit with CPD on wellness checks.

Closing

Member Burbanks, IV. moved and Member Burlew seconded a motion to adjourn the Board meeting. The meeting ended at 7:52 p.m. (Agree 4 - Oppose 0 - Abstain 0). **Motion passed.**

The next meeting will be held on **Monday, January 5, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.**

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