

February 24, 2025

Honorable Members of the Syracuse Common Council:

Ms. Rasheada Caldwell

Mr. Amir Gethers

Mr. Patrick Hogan

Ms. Helen Hudson

Ms. Patrona Jones-Rowser

Dr. Chol Majok

Mr. Jimmy Monto

Mr. Marty Nave

Ms. Rita Paniagua

Mr. Corey Williams

CC to:

Mayor Ben Walsh

Deputy Mayor Sharon Owens

CRB Board Chair Bryn Lovejoy-

Grinnell

Members of the CRB Board

We write to you again as concerned citizens who feel strongly that residents of the City of Syracuse need a fully functional, community-driven Citizen Review Board (CRB) that is empowered and supported to fulfill its mission. We understand that serious issues with the operations of the CRB are ongoing and that temporary measures are currently in place to address staffing challenges. We urge you to ensure that a search for a new CRB Administrator with appropriate skills and knowledge of law enforcement oversight is prioritized so that it can operate at its fullest potential.

You may recall that back in November of 2024 this group sent you a letter requesting the establishment of a Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC) to review the CRB legislation and recommend revisions. It has recently come to our attention that such a Legislative Advisory Committee has been convened without any public notice. While we are glad to hear of some progress to this request, we are dismayed by the lack of public transparency and collaboration in its convening, official charge, selection of its membership, meeting schedule and location. This lack of transparency further damages the public's trust in the CRB, brings the work of this LAC into question, and further limits public access to critical information surrounding the CRB's functioning and ability to provide effective input into the revision of the CRB's enabling legislation. This process should not have been initiated or proceeded in the dark away from public view or awareness! To our knowledge, neither the Mayor's office or current CRB Board were officially informed of the LAC's convening either before the LAC commenced its deliberations.

We find this process of convening the LAC to be highly problematic, as there should have been transparency and public notification at every step of this process given that such a LAC is a quasi-governmental entity. Instead, the LAC seems to have been composed, convened, charged, initiated and proceeded with its deliberations behind closed doors. This is unacceptable. As with the LAC convened in 2011 to revise the CRB legislation, all meetings of the LAC should be subject to the NYS Open Meetings Law. Additionally, its meetings should be held in the Common Council Chambers, as were the meetings of the LAC formed in 2011 by then Councilor Hunter. This would ensure that the public could attend LAC meetings, which should also be documented with publicly available minutes of each meeting. We also believe that the minutes of previous meetings should be made available to the public as soon as possible, and that similar to the established practice in CRB meetings a public comment period should be held at the end of each LAC meeting.

We urge you to immediately pause meetings of the current LAC until the issues articulated in this letter are addressed, including but not limited to: broad public notice of the existence of the LAC, its charge, members, meeting times, location, and past meeting minutes; a requirement to adhere by NYS Open Meetings Law; and changing meeting locations so the public doesn't experience barriers to attending, such as needing an ID for entry. Finally, as we have suggested

before, we urge the Council to add individuals to the LAC that reflect the broad diversity of City residents who have been affected by the conduct of police officers, and individuals who are knowledgeable about our CRB's history and legislation, and at least one representative of the Common Council and of the Mayor's staff.

We feel that, by proceeding with this process in the dark, further harm has been done to the public perception of the CRB and to the tasks of providing it with enhanced legislation and support for its work. Steps need to be taken NOW to address these errors and to move forward in a much more transparent, collaborative and accountable manner.

Sincerely,

Alan Rosenthal

Peter McCarthy

Barrie Gewanter

Deka Dancil

Charles Anderson

Jackie LaSonde

Nancy Keefe-Rhodes

Victoria Coit