



## Charlotte-Mecklenburg Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge #9

1201 Hawthorne Lane, Charlotte, NC 28205 • Tel. 704-376-3838

December 14, 2020

Johnny Jennings, Police Chief  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department  
601 E. Trade St.  
Charlotte, NC 28202

### RE: **Officer Morale & Welfare**

Chief Jennings,

First, we wish you a speedy recovery from COVID and look forward to being able to meet with you again in person. We do not know when that will be, but we wanted to connect regarding some issues we would like to discuss before the year ends.

The Fraternal Order of Police has fought hard to improve officer salaries, get premium exposure pay, and other benefits for our members and your officers. Moving into the new year we do not feel that seeking a pay increase is in our best interest. We believe focusing on officer morale, and welfare-related topics are the top priority. Furthermore, these matters are ones that you, as the Police Chief, have sole decision-making abilities to implement.

In a review of your responses to the Town Hall held on December 9<sup>th</sup>, we would like to offer more insight in hopes you may reconsider some of the topics discussed along with some that were not. In the Town Hall, around the 4:08 mark, you said that you will always stand by things to improve morale. As Chief, you requested officers to provide you with suggestions, utilizing different outlets such as Town Halls and a survey on improving morale. Your officers have provided you with feedback and the Fraternal Order of Police believes these following strategic changes can immediately improve officer morale:

#### 1. **External Vest Carrier**

We request concrete reasoning as to why the rejection of external vest carriers continues. The main reasoning is based on officer safety but where is the supporting evidence? The job of a “cop” is inherently dangerous in itself. There are currently many CMPD officers who wear an external carrier every day, and it is the promoted uniform for CMPD’s recruitment on [charlottepolicejobs.org](http://charlottepolicejobs.org). We believe the benefits the vest carrier (like POB wear) brings outweighs the isolated instances of being grabbed ahold of.

The vest carrier's implementation offers immediate relief to pains associated with long-term wear of the "duty belt", and provides a better fit of ballistic vest coverage. The CMPD prides itself on being a department of innovation and one that “sets the standard” for other departments to follow. The external vest carriers have been in existence for many years and are becoming the standard uniform for departments nationwide. We believe that if external carriers did pose a significant danger, there would be countless articles on their danger along with law enforcement organizations opposing them. Your approval of the external vest carrier will help with officers'



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health and morale and we ask you to reconsider and, if not previously done so, consult with departments who utilize a similar vest to see if any safety concerns outweigh the benefits.

### **2. Take-Home Cars for South Carolina Residents (topic starts at 26:46 mark)**

Currently, the CMPD Policy of "take-home" cars is only available to officers that reside within CMPD's response areas. We support this policy but request that you allow officers who, by their assignment, are provided a car to be eligible to take them home regardless of where they reside, including South Carolina. Currently, officers and detectives in specialized assignments, along with members of command take their cars home that do not reside within Mecklenburg County. In fact, according to the NC Board of Elections website, all but one of your Deputy Chiefs reside outside of Mecklenburg County and regularly take their City car home.

We would argue that there is no greater benefit to the City by those who take cars home to counties other than Mecklenburg than if a car was driven to a home in York County. The benefits are the same regardless of where a car is parked. There are no legal justifications that would prevent this from occurring and as your reply indicated, you are open to allowing it in a to and from work capacity only. We would ask that you trust your officers enough to abide by this rule and hold those who violate it accountable. We feel there is ample justification to show the benefit.

It is hard to believe that an officer, detective, or member of command who resides in Iredell, Stanley, Union, Gaston, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Anson, and other counties somehow has greater abilities than they would if they were to live in York County or one of equal distance into South Carolina. We support incentivizing officers for living in CMPD's jurisdiction, but penalizing them for not shows bias and negatively impacts morale.

### **3. SWAT Mandate that members reside in North Carolina**

While this is not currently in the SWAT SOP, we have confirmed that officers who reside in South Carolina will be ineligible for SWAT. We understand this rule is in the process of being added. CMPD allows officers to reside in both North and South Carolina. We feel that preventing any officer who is compliant with departmental policies to be ineligible for any assignment based on where they reside is discriminatory. A justification for this rule, as we understand it, is that because the car cannot be taken home to South Carolina, it impedes response time. However, if #2 above was enacted, this rule becomes invalid. Officers, who may provide excellent service by becoming a member of the SWAT team, would lose this opportunity simply because of their zip code. This rule is one we feel is based on personal bias and is derived from the fact there are current SWAT members who do not reside in Mecklenburg County and can somehow respond quicker than if a member lived the same distance away in South Carolina.

### **4. Internal Affairs Board Hearings**

The current implementation of Internal Affairs Boards leaves room for biased rulings. Officers who have matters before the Board are at the mercy of the Major. Boards are comprised of peers and other members of various ranks to hear facts of the case. Regardless of what each of these members may say, the Major can rule based on a unilateral decision. Even in cases where Subject Matter Experts (SME) finds in the officer's favor, the Major could still rule against these recommendations.



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We ask that you remove the Major from being the sole judge and jury. Apply their role as oversight to ensure the Internal Affairs hearing procedures are followed. All Internal Affairs Board hearings should conclude based on the Internal Affairs Independent Chain of Command Review Board's consensus.

We also request wording from the directives be updated. Biased is built into the policy, as stated in Directive 200-001:

### VII.

**D. Investigations conducted by Internal Affairs that indicate that there is a fair probability that employee misconduct has occurred will be heard by an Independent Chain of Command Review Board or a Division/Section level Chain of Command Review Board**

An officer who stands before an Internal Affairs Board is already suggested to have sustained the allegation by their presence at a hearing.

Finally, in cases where SME's are requested and find in favor of the officer's action(s), we ask that the officer be immediately exonerated of all charges on the specific allegations the SME reviewed (ex: excessive use of force, amendment violations, etc.).

In closing, as the Police Chief of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, we ask that you implement these changes. Too often, the bureaucracy of organizations gets in the way of logical changes that have immediate and positive results to employee welfare. These changes are beneficial to officers and citizens alike. A happy officer will extend to how they engage with citizens.

Again, we are deeply grateful for the relationship we have with your office. We welcome any meetings and input you may have on these and other matters. We will always advocate for our members and ask that you take our message into serious consideration. Please reach out to me or any of our other Board Members with any questions.

Fraternally yours,

Daniel Redford  
Vice President, NC Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge #9

CC: Zeru Chickoree  
Mark Michalec