

Open Letter to Our Community from CPC Co Chair

July 12, 2023

By the end of December 2022, thirteen individuals had been selected and had taken the oath to serve as public officials on Cleveland's Community Police Commission. Each of us committed to improve the welfare of this City. We committed to constitutional police reform; we committed to improving relations between our community and our police; we committed to creating a safer Cleveland for all of our residents.

We came to this commission with common concerns and common goals, prescribed initially in part by Issue 24, strengthened by its passage, and further strengthened by City Charter 115-5 and the mandates of the federal consent decree. Thirteen individuals came to this commission with common concerns and common goals - but the latter can not be accomplished without a collaborative will.

You see, we are not a monolithic group. Our strongest asset - diversity - is also our most threatening. We do not think alike. We bring such a strong diversity of thoughts, experiences and community engagement [and] they must coalesce around a collaborative will.

The goals that we committed to when we raised our hands and took the oath of office require painstaking work - it is not easy work. And it requires that every decision should not only be about the "now" but for a future Cleveland where all of its citizens cannot only succeed but also thrive in a safe community.

We did not come to the table to demonize the police. Police are needed in a civil society. The work we are charged to do will create a standard in our City - reforming policies and procedures and identifying unacceptable police behavior that need and must change. Already we are working collectively (collaboratively?) with police to make that happen. We are realistic enough to know that there will be challenges and pushbacks, but that will not and cannot deter us from our mission.

We both exist, police and commission, to protect and serve this City and its residents.

We cannot be expected to change centuries old culture immediately. We must learn, and while learning, we grow.

There is dignity required in this work - compassion, objectivity, fairness and, yes, transparency. And there must be the nonnegotiable "RESPECT". We must be as receptive and non-defensive to constructive criticism as we are gracious and humbled receiving accolades.

One incident, and what an incident it was, cannot be allowed to overshadow the critical work that is required of this commission. We must be unflinching in accomplishing what this community, our community, expected of us when we were selected. And, we must learn to drive our own narrative - and it must be a clear narrative, or we will be driven by the narratives of others, especially the media.

We came to this commission "all fired up and ready to go". We need to reignite that fire within our commission, with the community, and with our police department.

Every decision we make - every decision this commission makes - affects us, too.

You see, we thirteen individuals who represent this City, we are Clevelanders, too.