



The City of Morgantown  
Civilian Police Review and Advisory Board

# 2023 Annual Report

Submitted to the  
City of Morgantown City Clerk  
on January 16, 2024

Upon receipt, this report shall be distributed to the City Council, the City Manager, the Chief of Police, and the Chair of the Morgantown Police Civil Service Commission

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## Board Purpose

The Civilian Police Review and Advisory Board is established pursuant to Ordinance 2022-12, which re-codified Article 180.5 entitled “Civilian Police Review and Advisory Board” as Article 178 of the City Code of the City of Morgantown.

It is our purpose to further the exchange of information between community members and the Morgantown Police Department; to support just and equitable policing policies and practices and to make recommendations that protect and serve the life and health and safety of all who live, work and play in the City of Morgantown.

Additional information about the Board – including its powers and duties, governing structure, principles for conducting business, and more – may be found in the establishing Ordinance and newly published Bylaws.

## Board Membership in 2023

- Richard Burks (Chair) Term to expire July 4, 2025
- Rachel Fetty (Vice-Chair) Term to expire July 4, 2025
- Robert Cohen (Secretary) Term to expire July 4, 2025
- Dady Dadyburjor Term to expire July 4, 2024
- Megan Gandy Term to expire July 4, 2024
- Bryan Church Term to expire July 4, 2026
- Catherine Fonseca Term to expire July 4, 2026
- Nicole Lauffer Resigned on August 31, 2023

The Civilian Police Review and Advisory Board (CPRAB) convened its inaugural meeting on April 4, 2023. Election of officers took place on that date, electing Richard Burks to Chair, Rachel Fetty to Vice-Chair, and Nicole Lauffer to Secretary. Nicole Lauffer stepped down from the Board and her position as Secretary on August 31, 2023, as a result of a job appointment with the City and in accordance with the Board's Establishing Ordinance, Section 178.03(b)(2) disqualifying a person from membership on the Board while employed with the City. Robert Cohen was subsequently elected Secretary in a regular meeting vote on September 14, 2023.

The Board currently holds two vacancies. The CPRAB is actively campaigning to recruit new board candidates for the City Council to interview and appoint. This is particularly important since two members' terms are set to expire in less than a year. The Board encourages City Council to consider its current and forthcoming vacancies when screening candidates.

## Major Activities of the Board in 2023

### **Convening the inaugural meeting**

In its inaugural meeting on April 4, 2023, the Board held officer elections and also established four working committees. Those committees include the:

- a) *Bylaws Committee*, whose purpose is to research the bylaws of similar organizations, draft bylaws for the Board in accordance with City Code Section 178.04(c) and solicit feedback on the drafted bylaws.
- b) *Training Committee*, whose purpose is to research and select appropriate opportunities for annual training or continuing education for Board Members relating to matters of community policing and best practices within law enforcement contexts.
- c) *Community Outreach Committee*, whose purpose is to identify and facilitate opportunities for the Board to communicate to the public regarding Board activities and scope, as well as opportunities for the Board to hear input from the public regarding policing in the community.
- d) *Statistical Data and Reporting Committee*, whose purpose is to publish, in collaboration with the Morgantown Police Department, regular reports of data relating to Morgantown Police Department operations, including calls for assistance, stops, searches, arrests, charges, and convictions. The committee will also oversee the preparation of the Board's annual report and work plan.

Regular board meetings have been established for the second Thursday of each month, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Public Safety Building, Main Level Conference Room 300 Spruce Street, Morgantown, WV 26505. A virtual option via Teams or Zoom will be offered when possible.

The Board also fulfilled on-boarding protocols for new members, including five completed ride-alongs with MPD police officers, an initial reading of MPD policy and procedure documents, and a search for an annual member training related to the principles and applications of community policing.

### **Drafting and codifying Board bylaws**

Thanks to the diligent efforts of the Board’s Bylaws Committee, the Board drafted a set of bylaws to guide the governance and conduct of the Civilian Review Police and Advisory Board. Progress was made through a series of special meetings and with the assistance of relevant entities, including the City Attorney. On November 9, 2023, the Board voted unanimously to approve and adopt the bylaws. Secretary Robert Cohen sent the completed bylaws to the City Clerk for publication on the CPRAB’s website hosted by the City of Morgantown.

### **Drafting statistical data points for regular, public reports**

Section 178.06(b) of the CPRAB’s establishing ordinance calls for the Board to collect and report statistical data relating to the operations of the Morgantown Police Department, on a schedule no less than annually. In order to institute a reporting mechanism and workflow, the Statistical Data and Reporting Committee met with MPD to assess their database capabilities and review current and archived system reports. Since the reporting dashboard has no exhaustive codebook or data dictionary from which the Board could select, MPD recommended that the Board separately identify a wish list of crime and policing data. In the second phase of this work, MPD's administrative staff will help to translate the Board’s data wish list to align with localized variables within their reporting database.

To determine appropriate data points, the Statistical Data and Reporting Committee researched best practices and reporting models from analogous civilian police advisory bodies as well as other police departments. The Board drafted and finalized a set of data points meant to enhance transparency and accountability around policing activities within the City. The Board is waiting for feedback from a criminology expert from WVU, after which we intend to liaise with the Morgantown Police Department administrative staff to translate our wish list to existing data variables in the system.

Given the startup work required for regular data reporting, the Board hopes to publish its first statistical data report in 2024, the first full service year of the Board.

### **Strengthening public communication and outreach**

The Board has sought out opportunities to establish connections and channels of communication with the public. Early in the year, the Community Outreach

Committee solicited individual City Councilors and Morgantown Pride for suggestions on establishing rapport between the community, police entities, and the CPRAB.

With the assistance of the City of Morgantown's IT Manager, the CPRAB also established an email address for the Board ([cprab@morgantownwv.gov](mailto:cprab@morgantownwv.gov)). An email option for contacting the Board is now conveniently available on the Board's website hosted by the City of Morgantown. The email inbox is reviewed prior to the agenda-setting for each regular meeting, and members will be alerted to any public comments.

The CPRAB is planning an open house forum in February 2024, to be held in the Morgantown Public Library. The purpose of the forum is to share, with the community, the Board's establishing ordinance, clarify our scope and limitations, and listen to community input on matters relating to city policing.

### **Engaging in multiple discussions with MPD**

Over the past year, the Board has begun to review MPD policies, procedures, officer experiences, and trends in law enforcement within the Morgantown community. To that end, the CPRAB has invited representatives of the Morgantown Police Department to discuss these considerations directly with the Board, on two separate occasions.

For our May 2023 regular meeting, the Board invited then Deputy Chief P.J. Scott and Captain M. Solomon to meet with the Board. Topics of discussion included methods of future communication, expectations, mutual interests in community safety and respect, departmental concerns around staffing, officer training materials and schedules, procedures for auditing body camera footage, and other matters. MPD representatives were welcomed to attend regular board meetings, when possible and as staffing allowed.

For our October 2023 regular meeting, the Board invited Chief Powell and MPD Social Worker, Kelly Rice, to discuss the practice of service-related referrals in law enforcement, departmental priorities and understanding of Kelly's position, common issues and referral interventions observed by Kelly, and departmental adjustments to an in-house social worker. Discussion of these matters was lengthy, but concluded with remarks by Board members commending MPD for

the creation of a social worker role and articulating the importance of Kelly's work for the community.

### **Collecting civilian and MPD materials for a case study review**

One of the Board's major goals this year has been to learn more about how the Morgantown Police Department handles and documents individual incidents in the City of Morgantown. In early discussions with Deputy Chief Scott, the Board identified a specific incident to use as a case study exercise. The case involves the MPD response on 8/30/21 to an incident at the downtown Morgantown Sheetz resulting in an arrest. The goal for the case study review is to understand police procedure, understand the role of MECCA 911 and the information collected and relayed, as well as the standards for making an arrest. In order to facilitate this process, the Board requested MPD documentation associated with the incident, to complement civilian recordings already obtained by the CPRAB. The Board requested and received the following items related to the Sheetz incident:

- 911 call record.
- Documentation or description of the protocol for that type of situation.
- The basis for the charges against the person arrested of disorderly conduct, fleeing from an officer, and trespassing, and the disposition of these three charges in court.
- Bodycam footage associated with the incident.
- All written record materials such as case reports and use of force reports.

The Board wishes to commend the Morgantown Police Department for their timeliness and cooperation in supplying materials requested by the Board. Since receipt of the requested materials, the Board has been reviewing these materials. It is the intention of the Board to set a meeting in the new year for an in-depth discussion between Board members and MPD representatives to clarify procedural elements of the case.

## Board Priorities for 2024

The following are priorities that will guide Board activities in the upcoming year, in no particular order:

1. Host a public forum to educate the public about the Board, to be held on February 8 from 6:00 to 7:30 in Meeting Room A of the Morgantown Public Library.
2. Assess the success of the public forum and explore the possibility of additional outreach events based on event assessment.
3. Conduct a case study review with MPD of the 8/30/21 incident at the Sheetz in downtown Morgantown, to gain a better understanding of police policies, training, and procedures in practice.
4. Arrange an annual training opportunity for Board members to attend.
5. Publish the inaugural statistical report relating to operations and activities of Morgantown Police Department.
6. In coordination with a WVU service-learning course, formulate a community survey instrument gauging police perception and establish a plan for its implementation.
7. Proactively recruit to fill board vacancies (currently two), with the assistance of City Council.
8. Hold internal training for Board members to orient them to shared drive and file library, supplied by the City.
9. Attend neighborhood association and relevant community organization meetings in order to build cooperative relationships and promote understanding of the Board's purpose and scope.
10. Establish a workplan for conducting a systematic review of MPD policies and procedures