



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF DANE COUNTY, INC.

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Testimony to City of Madison Public Safety Review Committee
May 9, 2017

Members of the League of Women Voters of Dane County have been observing the meetings of the President's Work Group on Police and Community Relations over the last several months. We have reviewed the report and Chief Koval's response (dated April 28) to an earlier draft.

We urge this committee to support the report.

The League believes that law enforcement policy should be developed cooperatively by citizens, local elected officials, and law enforcement agencies, and should reflect local needs. We believe this set of recommendations effectively represents the concerns of the community, and appropriately directs our experts in the Police Department to follow broad guidelines in developing specific procedures that will be workable.

We have been impressed by the care taken by the Work Group to investigate models of police policy such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police and City of New York. The Work Group has taken care to prioritize the safety of the police themselves.

The Workgroup has not tried to impose specific wording on the Madison Police Department but is directing that the MPD incorporate these concepts into its own Standard Operating Procedures.

Our police were found to have followed department policy in all of the following incidents of concern:

- the deaths of unarmed men in 2012 and 2015
- the death of a mentally ill individual who was alone in a home, armed with a metal rake, who was approached and then killed by a police officer in 2016, and
- the violent arrest of an 18 year old woman outside of East Towne Mall in 2016.



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I believe Mayor Soglin accurately represented majority opinion in our city about what we saw on video of Genele Laird's arrest by commenting that just because the police tactics in this incident were legal, that didn't make them right.

Our community would prefer that our police be trained and empowered to de-escalate situations. Our community would prefer that police get help to deal with people disoriented by mental illness, alcohol, or other drugs. Our community would prefer that when a person does not present any immediate threat to public safety, police attempt to talk the individual into cooperation, rather than immediately resort to physical force.

Chief Koval does not object that the directives compromise the safety of his officers or of the public. He summarized his concerns by stating "I also cannot endorse any effort by the Common Council to direct MPD Operations." The League believes it is critical to support the principle that our elected officials have the authority to set community standards for public policy.

Americans support our soldiers and sailors and appreciate their willingness to serve, but we retain the principle of civilian control of the military. In the same way, our community supports our police and appreciates their daily bravery on our behalf, but we adhere to the principle that our elected representatives set overall policy for city employees.

Our community has been waiting since Paul Heenan's death in 2012 for changes that will keep our police and our citizens more safe. I encourage this committee to take the next steps toward making appropriate changes by supporting this report.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to the perspective of the League of Women Voters of Dane County.