



Date: Dec. 7, 2020_____

CITY OF MADISON

Registration Statement - Police and Fire Commission COMMITTEE

Please Print

PLEASE PRINT NAME CLEARLY

Public Comment 12/9/2020_____

Name Steven Verburg

Address 1614 Wendy

Madison Wi

Please check one:

AND

Please check one:

- ☐ Support
- ☒ Oppose
- ☐ Neither Support Nor Oppose

- ☒ Wish to Speak
- ☐ Do not wish to speak
- ☐ Available to Answer Questions

At this meeting are you representing an organization or a person other than yourself: ☐ Yes ☒ No
(If you answered "no," **STOP**; you need not complete the rest of this form. If you answered "yes," provide the name of who you represent and go on to the next question.)

Name, address and telephone number of each person or organization you are representing:

Are you being paid for your representation? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Are you appearing as part of your other paid duties for this person or organization? ☐ Yes ☒ No
(If you answered "no," **STOP**; you need not complete the rest of this form. If you answered "yes," go on to the next question.)

Speaking Limits: Public Hearing (Common Council) 5 minutes
Information Hearing..... 3 minutes
Other Items..... 3 minutes

(SEE BACK)

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Are you an elected official or employee who is appearing solely on behalf of your office or for your municipality or other governmental body? ☐ Yes ☒ No

*(If you answered "yes" to the question, **STOP**. You need not complete the rest of this form, except that you must sign this form. If you answered "no" to the question, go on to the next question.)*

If you are being paid for your representation, or if your appearance is part of other paid duties, please be advised that:

1. Before you engage in lobbying as a lobbyist, you or your principal must file an authorization with the City Clerk.
2. Your principal is not permitted to authorize you to lobby unless you are registered with the City Clerk.
3. Your principal must file expense statements with the City Clerk for the remainder of the calendar year regardless of the amount spent on lobbying.

(Please go to the City Clerk's website www.cityofmadison.com/clerk/index.html or go to the Clerk's Office at Room 103 of the City-County Building, Madison, for more information.)

Date Dec. 7, 2020

Signature Steven Verburg

Print Name Steven Verburg

From: [Steve Verburg](#)
To: [Police Chief Search](#); jrousseau@strangpatteson.com
Subject: Request the PFC help our next chief by conducting a fully public process
Date: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 11:06:43 PM

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Members of the Madison Police and Fire Commission,

I am writing to support postponing the hiring of a police chief until a public process including public interviewing of the finalists can take place.

However, if you are determined to hire a chief today, I can see no other choice than Mr. Batista, based on the limited information the public has been provided.

It is strange indeed that the commission has decided to announce police chief finalists on Friday, interview the finalists in secret on Tuesday, and pick a police chief in secret on Wednesday.

It doesn't need to be this way. In many places, the hiring authority treats both the finalists and the people of the community as adults; treats them as though they were citizens in a democracy; and makes them partners who might bring valuable perspectives and – perhaps more importantly – might get to know the candidates and even become invested in the success of the next police chief.

If you were to ask, you would find out that a year ago one of your four finalists was a finalist in my hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan. All of the Grand Rapids finalists met with the public and answered their questions. You could still do that here.

Failing to do so will put our next police chief at a great disadvantage. These times are challenging enough without making them more difficult.

As it is, I don't know enough about these finalists to confidently tell you who I think would be the best chief for Madison. The information you've provided the public has been incredibly scant. Why not at least release each finalist's resume and letter of application? And why limit public comment to sixty minutes?

In the huge information vacuum created by the commission, Madison residents are being forced to do their own research from scratch. A community that already has a sharp

divergence of opinion about the nature of its crime problem and the appropriate path forward now has no common set of facts as the basis for discussion. By Sunday you could find widely divergent characterizations of candidates. My own reading of the public record on Mr. Davis, the Portland deputy chief, left me wondering if the commission had been provided with an adequate background check on each applicant, and if so, what purpose was perceived in choosing Mr. Davis as a finalist.

In 2002, Mr. Davis was involved the police killing a man. The case was so controversial that it sparked major protests by Latinx residents and representatives of civil rights and mental health organizations. (This was in 2002, a decade before the killing of Trayvon Martin began the wave of protests against police killings that continues today.) The Portland police Internal Affairs office Mr. Davis directed was widely reputed to be an operation that covered up misconduct. A police lieutenant in Portland filed a \$300,000 civil rights lawsuit against Davis, his chief and others in 2014 because she was retaliated against after investigating misconduct allegations against Davis. His role in highly questionable aspects of the police response to recent protests is also troubling. And, as a finalist for the Milwaukee police chief post, he received zero support from PFC members.

Mr. Barnes appears to have very recently accepted a position with the Chicago Police Department and he is already seeking to leave CPD employment. How is the Madison community supposed to understand this in the vacuum of information we've been provided?

Mr. Sciroto ended his policing career, and now in retirement is applying for various chief jobs. Again, this is a little bit of a strange circumstance. Without hearing from Mr. Sciroto about his motivation, one could legitimately wonder if in fact he wishes to be retired, and if he was to be hired as Madison police chief how invested he would be in taking on such a challenging job.

Mr. Batista seems by far the best candidate. (Clearly, I'm telling you that I'm basing this on incomplete knowledge.) But in my view, the embarrassing and worsening racial disparities in arrests by the Madison Police Department are the most serious issue facing the police department. Mr. Batista's strength of character in demanding at least a small degree of restraint in the brutality Mesa police meted out to people (please watch the videos of the attacks if you haven't already) makes me think he might be willing to look critically at use of force policies in Madison, and that he might be willing to consider ways of reining in the department's outrageous overpolicing of Black men, women and children.

Of course it's difficult to know based on the information we've been provided and the total lack of access to the candidates.

In the 1990s I was a newspaper reporter in Saginaw, Michigan, when the city council hired a new police chief. The chief was hired after weeks of public vetting. Each candidate met with the public for question and answer sessions. All the City Council interviews with the finalists were conducted in public and telecast on the government cable channel. My newspaper wrote

extensive profiles of each finalist. I had never before covered the hiring of the police chief, and I was accustomed to covering local governments that frequently sought to operate in secret. But in the case, the Saginaw City Council chose a public process.

They reasoned that a good police chief would need to be able to engage meaningfully with the public, so why not see how each candidate could do that during the interview process. The council also reasoned that the police chief would need to show the ability to win the trust of the public in order to be successful. Again, why not give each candidate a chance to show how it could be done?

Don't hire a police chief without an extensive public vetting process.

If you must hire someone without allowing the public to be engaged, hire Mr. Batista.

Sincerely,

Steve Verburg

Madison, Wisconsin

Aldermanic District 16