From: Charles James
To: Mayor; All Alders
Cc: Equal Opportunities Commission; pdprsc@cityofmadison.com
Subject: BWCs
Date: Saturday, February 6, 2021 5:41:55 PM

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Dear Mayor Rhodes-Conway, dear Alders:

I don't understand.

I've heard that there is a question as to whether or not to give the Madison Police Department so-called "body-worn cameras" (BWCs). Across the nation, many, if not most, major police departments have BWCs and use them within strict guidelines developed at the national and regional levels. The MPD should have access to this technology, too.

I don't understand.

Opponents of BWCs say that they will be used to identify undocumented residents and that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will have access to footage generated by BWCs. There is no evidence that this is a realistic concern. The MPD is accountable to the City of Madison, not ICE or any other federal agency. Interactions among these various agencies already operate under strict guidelines. BWCs will not create any significant new obligations. The MPD should be allowed to use this technology without interference from outsiders.

I don't understand.

Opponent of BWCs claim that the police are able to turn on and turn off BWCs at will, thus frustrating their use, or they will be able to delete footage unpleasant to the police. This is nonsense. Municipalities that currently use BWCs have guidelines that determine when and where they will be used. Recent events that involve especially officer involved shootings more often than not can be used to fire or even to criminally indict officers for abuse of use of force. The example that immediately comes to mind is the shooting of an unarmed Black man in his garage by a police officer in Columbus, Ohio. It was caught on the officer's BWC. This past week he was indicted based on that footage. If he had not been wearing a BWC, the situation would have been reported very differently..

I don't understand.

There are groups in Madison who are openly critical of the MPD. That is why you created the Police Civilian Oversight Board. Let the MPD have the BWCs, with the expectation that the PCOB will monitor their use in the months to come. I would like to think that the PCOB is

interested in investigating what the MPD does with any of the tools or software they currently have. BWCs will add another layer of accountability to policing in Madison. Let the MPD have them. The PCOB will keep them honest.

I hope you understand.

Respectfully,

Charles J. James
Westmorland (District 11)