**Police Accountability Board for Charles County**

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James Thiel

2480Fenwick Circle

Bryans Road, Maryland 20616-3134

My name is James Thiel. I am a college-educated, registered architect, lifelong resident of Bryans Road. I speak five languages and volunteer with the Sierra Club and the Charles County Historic Society… I’m also a survivor of police brutality. At no point following my assault and torture by police did either Montgomery County or the State of Maryland come to my aid or instruct me where I might file complaint other than upon my request, direct me to the very same agency that treated me like a carcass, laughed at, and taunted me while I objected. Rather, both the agency and the state decisively used my objection and my withholding of consent to condemn me as: “uncooperative”, and administratively deflected liability for my own attack onto me in a most shameful and cowardly display of victim blaming. Perhaps this sort of thing doesn’t happen in Charles County at the moment… but what could happen in Montgomery (by virtue of the same devious system), can very easily happen here in Charles, if we don’t take measures to provide for unbiased police accountability directly answerable to the same population being policed.

Police will ask, how they can ever be judged without knowing what it means to do police work… They will question the public’s ability to empathize with the uniqueness of their position. But is their work and any of their lives anymore unique than any of ours? We who are subject to the violence of their justice at any and every moment of the day and must often choose between asserting one’s own rights to human dignity in the face of physical force and the loss of life, limb, and sacred Liberty.

Internal Affairs representatives will claim to be objective, but always from the point of view of one immune and ultimately unaffected. The Fraternal Order of Police which is nothing more than a protection racket disguised as a labor union will hold your safety hostage and have you living in the grip of fear for as long as you let them.

This board is instated by act of legislature and therefore is law, and if police had any respect for the law and our democratic process which created it, then they will surely welcome this most momentous evolution toward ensuring the proper checks and balance of power

This board will not be about promoting empathy for police, but about ensuring that police empathize with the very people who equip and empower them to their protection. Lately, I’ve been hearing a lot of talk about repairing the relationship between police and the public whom they allegedly serve, without addressing the root cause of that miscommunication, as if it were merely an unfortunate coincidence.

This board will be about creating a healthy and robust channel of dialogue between the two increasingly divergent perspectives, by restoring humanity to the equation. There will be no association past or present (whatsoever) between board members and police, their agencies, departments, unions, or any company (public or private) which contracts with, or advocates for, police or their unions.

Likewise, there will be no association with career military personnel or any requirement for prior combat or martial arts training since a large amount of the miscommunication between police and the public is due to police militancy. A military style approach to law enforcement recreates the all too dangerous unidentifiable enemy vs. military occupation force scenario at home, just as we have grown accustomed while on operations abroad.

The whole point of having an accountability board is to restore oversight to the people so that we may protect ourselves from the violence normalized by police and military style training and practice; that which is fully armed and treats anyone as suspect and suspects like a potential threat or an enemy.

We must also prohibit prior criminal convictions from being used to eliminate candidates for the board. For not only do the incarcerated, and the historically criminalized make up a significant portion of our subject population requiring representation; they have the requisite experience with the system and critical vantage point which many of us lack. Their voice above all should be prioritized to ensure both the equality and diversity necessary to effectively hold police accountable. Police are afraid of those who have been on the receiving end of their justice most of all; because they actually know the full story, and not merely what police would like the public to know or would have them believe. Whether a board candidate has ever been convicted of a crime or not is immaterial when a candidate can always be rejected on point of character alone, which is more to the point. And whether a citizen was convicted decades ago or only yesterday, that history doesn’t necessarily speak for his character today.

This board shall furthermore endeavor to consider a whole-health approach to conflict resolution and adjudication of complaints and prioritize nomination of a chairperson with practical expertise and “relevant experience” in the field of psychological medicine. However, there shall by no means be any minimum education requirement for any board member.

The board shall have an odd and relatively comprehensive number (of between 7 and 15 members) in order to be inclusive of various and diverse characteristics as represented by the population of the county. Board members shall serve for terms of 4 years and may serve up to three consecutive terms if reappointed.

A minimum of transparency will be guaranteed:

* It shall be fully disclosed how and why members have or haven’t been selected
* clear steps and sought-after skills and or experience shall be established
* public insight and commentary regarding selection shall be openly solicited
* an outline of how subpoena powers are to be practiced, shall be made public
* absolute transparency in the investigation process and their results shall be guaranteed

Conduct complaint forms shall be devised by the board posted on the board web page and issued by every law enforcement officer, to all parties, at the close of every official interaction with the public. Those forms shall be submitted directly to the accountability board for processing. The identity of the complainant shall remain anonymous to all but the board unless voluntarily disclosed by the complainant. The complainant will be allowed to be present at all phases of proceedings regarding the complainants filing, and any official result or determination shall be disclosed to the complainant in writing as soon as such a determination is reached.

the board budget needs to reflect the extreme importance of its task, since our lives, limbs, human-dignity, mental health and liberty are all at stake… there is much to consider and much healing work to be done.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments, for prioritizing citizens, and all your hard work on making true and effective accountability a reality.