



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Public Safety Commission Meeting - 4/23/2026

Date: April 23, 2026

Location: Willie L. Hinton Neighborhood Resource Center

Time: 6:10 PM

Quorum: Yes

I. Roll Call

- **Members Present:**

- Commissioner Burris
- Commissioner Charles
- Commissioner Doyle
- Commissioner Fowler
- Commissioner Gilbert
- Commissioner Herts

- A quorum was confirmed.

II. Opening Comments

A. City Attorney — Law Review Article on the 14th Amendment

- Atty. Lynette Perez shared that she had recently completed and submitted a law review article to Creighton University Law Review (Omaha, Nebraska) tracing the history of the 14th Amendment and birthright citizenship. The article examines the evolution of citizenship law from the post-Civil War era through present-day cases, drawing parallels between Plessy v. Ferguson and current Supreme Court proceedings (Kilmar Abrego Garcia v. Nome). She offered to share the article with commissioners and noted it may be of interest to those who enjoy legal history. She also noted the recently elected Pope Leo XIV's personal

connection to this history — his family's Creole and Black Haitian heritage and their migration from New Orleans to Chicago during the Jim Crow era, making him, by some accounts, the first pope of Black heritage.

B. City Attorney — PFAS Class Action Litigation Update

- Atty. Perez reported a significant new legal initiative — the city's potential joinder in a federal class action lawsuit related to PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination in firefighter protective gear. Key details:
- PFAS chemicals are present in the protective suits (bunker gear) worn by firefighters. Manufacturers are alleged to have known of potential health dangers without adequately disclosing them to purchasers.
- An existing class action was filed in federal court in Montana. The judge denied a motion to dismiss and set an aggressive trial schedule. A May 5th deadline was set for new plaintiffs to join.
- No Arkansas entities had previously joined. The City of Little Rock, as a major municipality, is positioned to lead Arkansas participation.
- A special one-item Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for the following Tuesday (April 28) to seek authorization to join the litigation. The Board will then proceed directly into its regular agenda meeting.
- The city is seeking compensation for the cost of 800 or more suits purchased over decades (approximately 2 per firefighter across the 400+ member department), as well as the cost of replacing affected gear with PFAS-free equipment.
- The lawsuit is against gear manufacturers, not any government entity. The city's attorneys are based in Delaware; the suit was filed in Montana.
- The Fire Chief was asked to compile all purchase records for the affected manufacturers dating back at least one decade.
- The commission was noted as among the first groups to hear of this initiative ahead of its public announcement.

C. Request — Police Chief Representation at Next Meeting

- Commissioner Burris requested that Chief Helton or a department representative attend the next meeting to provide data and updates on summer 2026 public safety planning, particularly in light of the recent shooting incident in the River Market district. Discussion included the effectiveness of the juvenile curfew implemented in the River Market and entertainment corridors last summer and the need for comparable

planning heading into this summer. Atty. Perez agreed to ensure the Chief or a representative is present at the next main meeting.

D. Commission Visibility — Mayor's Weekly Newsletter

- Commissioner Doyle suggested that the commission's meeting schedule be included in the Mayor's weekly newsletter to increase public awareness and potentially draw citizen participation. Atty. Perez agreed to raise this with the appropriate staff.

II. Old Business

A. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- A motion was made by Commissioner Burris and seconded by Commissioner Fowler to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as circulated.
- Vote: All present voted in favor (Aye). Motion carried.

B. Approval of MIH-CP Support Letter to City Board of Directors

- The commission reviewed the drafted letter of support for MEMS's Mobile Integrated Health Community Paramedicine (MIH-CP) program, prepared by the subcommittee following the March meeting presentation. The letter was generally approved with one requested edit: the names of all commissioners should be added to the letter before distribution.
- It was confirmed that the letter would be transmitted to Chris Harvey for inclusion in the City Board's communication packet, in time for the May 5th Board meeting.
- Motion: Motion was made by Commissioner Herts to approve the MIH-CP support letter with the addition of commissioners' names, and to transmit it to the City Board of Directors. Seconded by Commissioner Burris.
- Vote: All present voted in favor (Aye). Motion carried.

C. MEMS Site Visit

- Following positive communication received from MEMS — including a thank-you letter from presenter Amber Rosette and a response from MEMS Executive Director Greg Thompson — the commission was invited to schedule a facility tour. Commissioners expressed interest in hosting a

future meeting at the MEMS facility, which has a large conference room, to combine a regular meeting with a tour. Atty. Perez agreed to coordinate with MEMS to arrange the visit.

III. New Business

A. Community Trust in Law Enforcement — UCSD Study

- The commission continued its discussion from the March meeting regarding the University of California San Diego study on the impact of ICE enforcement operations on community trust in local law enforcement. Key discussion points:
- The study found that approximately 57-60% of surveyed residents in affected communities reported distrust of law enforcement broadly — not limited to ICE — following federal immigration enforcement activity.
- Approximately 30% of respondents stated they would not comply with a police command following those events.
- Commissioners noted that residents typically cannot distinguish between federal, state, and local officers, meaning the actions of one agency affect trust in all.
- The four-day ICE operation in Minneapolis resulted in approximately \$3 million in local police overtime costs as officers managed the downstream effects.
- Commissioner Doyle noted she has found her role on this commission meaningful in part because it gives her access to accurate crime data — such as the city's five-year downward trends — that she can share with constituents who hold outdated or negative perceptions of public safety in Little Rock.
- The commission agreed that one agenda priority for the next meeting with Chief Hilton should be asking whether and how LRPD has been affected by this trust erosion locally, and exploring how the commission can support collaborative responses.

B. Officer Uniform Standards — Collar Brass and Physical Appearance

- Commissioner Gilbert raised concerns about changes to LRPD uniform standards, specifically the elimination of mandatory collar brass (LRPD insignia worn on the collar) and changes to beard and grooming policies,

noting these affect officer identifiability and the paramilitary professional image described in General Order 100. Discussion included:

- The collar brass change was negotiated through the Fraternal Order of Police and is now written into policy as optional.
- Other commissioners noted that visible identification of officers as LRPD personnel supports community trust, while acknowledging that grooming accommodations exist for medical and religious reasons.
- The broader commission consensus was that uniform specifics fall somewhat outside the commission's direct scope but that identifiability of officers as local law enforcement — distinct from federal agents — is a relevant public trust issue worth raising with the Chief.
- Atty. Perez noted that local police are held to a high standard of training, certification, and accountability, distinguishing them from federal enforcement agencies operating without the same transparency or oversight.
- The commission agreed to raise the collar brass question with Chief Helton when he attends a future meeting, in the context of the broader community trust conversation.

C. Bylaw Amendment — Attendance Provision (Article 3, Section 4)

- The commission took up the proposed amendment to Article 3, Section 4 of the bylaws, which currently provides for automatic removal upon either (a) missing more than 25% of all regular meetings in a calendar year, or (b) missing more than three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings.
- The commission discussed that both triggers effectively result in the same threshold and agreed the consecutive meetings language was redundant. The proposed amendment removes the three-consecutive-meetings provision, retaining only the 25%-per-calendar-year standard.
- Motion: Commissioner Doyle moved to amend Article 3, Section 4 of the bylaws to remove the language regarding three consecutive missed meetings, retaining only the provision for missing more than 25% of regular meetings in a calendar year. Seconded by Commissioner Burris.
- Vote: All present voted in favor (Aye). Motion carried.

D. Subcommittee Rename — Research Task Force

- The commission discussed renaming the Youth Violence Reduction and Prevention Subcommittee to better reflect its current and evolving scope

of work, which has expanded beyond youth violence to include broader research, advocacy, and collaborative initiatives.

- Motion: Commissioner Fowler moved to rename the Youth Violence Reduction and Prevention Subcommittee to the Research Task Force Subcommittee. Seconded by Commissioner Burris
- Vote: All present voted in favor (Aye). Motion carried.

IV. Citizen Communications

- There were none.

VI. Adjournment

- Commissioner Burris made the motion to adjourn at 7:05 pm. Commissioner Charles seconded.
- All votes in favor. The meeting was adjourned.