

# City attorney, community leaders announce reform recommendations in Columbus

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (WSYX/WTTE) — The city attorney of Columbus wants an outside review of how Columbus Police performed their duties during the six days of protesting the death of George Floyd. Demonstrators and police clashed during protests, leading to dozens of arrests and the use of pepper spray and tear gas.

Zach Klein, city attorney, said the city of Charlottesville, Virginia, hired an outside counsel in the wake of unrest there in 2017. That's the model he's got in mind for an outside review.

"Any department that has been involved in the city of Columbus in the past six days, should be evaluated and we should be praised for what we've done right and learn from what we've done wrong and change those things immediately before we move forward," he said.

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Klein appeared with leaders of the local chapters of the NAACP and the Columbus Urban League.

Klein also called for a review of the city's tactics when it comes to clearing streets of protestors and the use of chemical agents on protestors.

In the long run, Klein called for a citizen review board that police would have to answer to, but he admitted that will be a long battle. A citizen review board must be negotiated with the union for Columbus police.

Klein shared action steps to immediately start assessing and improving police-community relations in the city:

## PROTEST RESPONSE AND CROWD CONTROL PROCEDURES:

1. Appoint special counsel to perform an independent, outside investigation and review of the City of Columbus' handling of the past week's events.

2. Conduct a review of Columbus Division of Police policies and procedures regarding the clearing of streets during peaceful demonstrations in order to avoid unnecessary confrontations between law enforcement and those exercising their First Amendment rights.

3. Change the Columbus Division of Police policies on using chemical agents to comport with best practices as identified by Matrix Consulting, thereby ending broad use of chemical agents against nonviolent protesters and requiring verbal warnings.

4. The Columbus City Attorney's Office has submitted evidence to the Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB) and will continue to do so as it is gathered. To date, we have submitted photos and videos of uses of chemical agents being used on protestors, the widely seen images of the man standing passively with his hands up as he is being maced in the face, and more. We encourage members of the public to do the same. We also request members of the public submit to police any and all evidence they may have that could potentially identify individuals or groups inciting violence and destruction so that we can hold those individuals accountable. Evidence can be submitted to the Department of Public Safety's Equal Opportunity Compliance Office at [reportCPD@columbus.gov](mailto:reportCPD@columbus.gov) or directly to IAB at [IABDeskSgt@columbuspolice.org](mailto:IABDeskSgt@columbuspolice.org).

## SYSTEMIC CHANGES TO IMPROVE POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

5. Create a Citizen Review Board, as recommended by the Community Safety Commission. The current FOP contract places limitations on how this can be fully implemented in the short-term. Accordingly, the Columbus City Attorney's Office

is reviewing the current FOP contract to identify immediate opportunities where civilian review can be implemented.

6. Move charging decisions for alleged misdemeanor criminal offenses to the Columbus City Attorney's Office for review before they are filed, similar to the charging process for the Franklin County Prosecutor with felony offenses. Officers will still have the immediate ability to arrest in a violent situation, but then the City Attorney's Office, through its charging process, will assure only appropriate charges are then filed. Citizens being charged for most non-violent offenses will receive a summons for court instead of being incarcerated prior to trial.

7. Conduct a review of the Columbus City Code relating to traffic and pedestrian offenses and examine how enforcement of those offenses can have an adverse impact on building trust between the police and the Black community.

8. Dedicate additional hours to the Columbus Division of Police's training program, separate from the current curriculum, for an immersion experience that helps build a relationship between the officers and the communities they serve prior to graduation. The purpose of these hours is for recruits to spend time building relationships and a commitment to those neighbors and community leaders, not in a law enforcement capacity but in public service, before they begin policing. The Columbus City Attorney's team who works directly with those communities will serve as a resource for officers learning about the unique struggles of those neighborhoods.

ABC 6/FOX 28 will continue to update this story.