

John Satorius
1235 Yale Place, #1403
Minneapolis, MN 55403
email: johnsatorius@gmail.com

April 22, 2026

Hon. Elliott Payne
President, Minneapolis City Council

Re: Response to April 15 Memorandum opposing continuation of Toddrick Barnette as
Commissioner of the Office of Community Safety

Dear President Payne,

I am a Minneapolis resident who has been deeply involved in public safety work since the murder of George Floyd and who supported Mayor Frey's re-election based in large part on my confidence in his ability to choose public safety leadership. In these capacities, I would like to respectfully respond to your April 15 Public Memorandum listing your reasons for opposing Mayor Frey's decision to have Cmmr. Toddrick Barnette continue as our Commissioner of the Office of Community Safety during Mayor Frey's new term.

Responses to Key Points in Elliott Payne April 15 Public Memorandum

1. The Memorandum is one-sided, in that it fails to balance the listed concerns with the public safety accomplishments under Cmmr. Barnette's leadership. During his tenure, MPD has been put on the path towards a transformed culture of policing that fights crime while respecting the sanctity of life and builds community trust. MPD has reversed officer departures, which had reduced the number of MPD officers from 825 in 2021 to a low point of 560 in early 2024, and MPD's recruiting strategies have now grown the department to 630 officers, having welcomed the largest graduating class in years (33 officers) in late 2025. In collaboration with ELEFA, MPD is implementing a comprehensive cutting-edge training program that ELEFA has recognized as a model for other law enforcement agencies across the country. Under Cmmr. Barnette's leadership, the Department of Neighborhood Safety within OCS has implemented a rigorous, cutting-edge contract award and monitoring process that has improved the overall stability and effectiveness of, as well as respect for, our violence interruption and violence prevention programs. Finally, what is missing from the Memorandum is an acknowledgment that not a single complaint about the use of excessive force by MPD has emerged under Cmmr. Barnette's leadership — and before that going back to the hiring of Chief O'Hara. Of course much more needs to be done, there are ongoing problems to be addressed, and there will be

surprises and even setbacks as we continue down the road, but I believe that this public safety progress to date must be factored into deciding whether to continue the leadership Mayor Frey feels capable of navigating this challenging future.

2. The Memorandum's concern about MPD's budget overruns incorrectly refers to these overruns as "mistakes", when in fact they were caused by unavoidable circumstances. The Memorandum also omits to acknowledge that the overruns were less than 10% of MPD's overall budget and that they were not a surprise because they had already been forecasted to the City Council by the Department of Finance and Property Services in its 2nd Quarter 2025 Financial Report. [LINK](#) Moreover, according to the City's website, it is the responsibility of the Department of Finance and Property Services, not department heads, to bring budget overruns to the attention on the City Council:

"The Finance and Property Services department will report to the relevant Council Committee following second quarter, third quarter and at year-end, expenditures and revenues by department and fund compared to authorized allocations for the prior fiscal year. This report will identify departments and funds with projected expenditures in excess of authorized appropriations and/or revenues projected to be less than budgeted amounts."

Nevertheless, after having been advised about the overruns, the City Council did not question Chief O'Hara about this until December, when he explained that the overruns were caused by excess police overtime incurred to reduce crime, excess training costs to bring more new recruits on board than expected, and unanticipated new infrastructure requirements that have emerged as MPD works to satisfy the MDHR Settlement Agreement. All of these additional expenses were unavoidable, and the Finance and Property Services Department obviously found a way to manage this.

3. The Memorandum's concern that Cmmr. Barnette has not provided a "specific plan or any corrective measures to prevent this kind of overspending" is premature and omits to acknowledge that (again, according to City's website), if and when forecasted expenditures warn of a potential budget overrun, it has been the practice for departments "to work with Finance and Property Services to execute a plan that reduces spending to meet authorized appropriations or otherwise addresses the deficit." I understand that, as part of the 2026 budget approval, the Minneapolis City Council now requires any department that exceeds its annual budget to submit monthly budget status reports. I view this as an example of good oversight, but also as an acknowledgment that leadership was not falling short of its reporting obligations prior to implementation of this new procedure.

4. The Memorandum's concern about the economics of the proposed Training and Wellness Center overlooks the fact that the City is working to include state appropriations in the project and that anticipated expenditures on projects like this are always a moving target until the final contracts are up for approval. I appreciate that this is frustrating for the City Council, but it is equally frustrating for Cmmr. Barnette and everyone else responsible for moving this project along.

5. I feel there is no basis for the Memorandum to charge Cmmr. Barnette for the Moturi, Lussier, and Samuels tragedies. All three of these tragedies were the kind of tragic “known assailant” shootings and murders that plague every public safety system in the world, because, unlike random violent crimes, such neighbor harassment, domestic violence, and other “known assailant” crimes involve known abusers who pose a constant known threat to their intended victims. The police cannot monitor either these assailants or their likely victims full time, nor can the police control when and on what terms assailants are released after they arrest them. Global Rights for Women recognizes this conundrum, urging that a “Coordinated Community Response” to this must include “health care practitioners, emergency hotline practitioners, first responders/dispatch, prosecutors, legal advocates, judges and court staff, probation/parole officers, and offender education”. [LINK](#) Moreover, the City’s Domestic Violence Workgroup told the City Council in June of last year that “given the status of MPD’s current severe shortage of officers, it may take one to three years to implement” their recommendations for improving MPD’s handling of domestic violence incidents. [LINK](#) Cmmr. Barnette and his teams are committed to doing better notwithstanding this constraint, but they need holistic support from other agencies, and changing leadership will not make this challenge any easier.

6. The “multiple issues” the Memorandum cites relative to managing violence intervention and violence prevention contracts were actually at their worst when Cmmr. Barnette came on board in the fall of 2023, and it was his diligent efforts that have put things on a better course. A lawsuit had been filed shortly before he took office (“Copolla Lawsuit”) alleging that the Department of Neighborhood Safety was awarding violence prevention/interruption contracts without “even the most basic competitive bidding or proposal evaluation procedures, resulting in an arbitrary and capricious procurement process.” Cmmr. Barnette was able to negotiate a settlement of this lawsuit that specified in detail the rigorous best practices for contract procurement and accountability that NSD began implementing in the 2025 procurement process and that it has continuously improved since then. When City Council raised concerns about the Salem, Inc. contract, NSD listened and changed course, but NSD also assured the City Council that the contract had initially passed the rigorous data-driven analytics adopted pursuant to best practices for awarding and monitoring such contracts. This is actually an example, not of poor leadership, but of how City Council oversight can and should work even for otherwise fully vetted contracts the are presented for consideration by the City Council. [STARTRIB LINK](#)

7. The Memorandum’s concern about OCS’ initial consideration of “Our Rescue” to provide no-cost training for MPD on fighting sex trafficking fails to mention that Our Rescue had been highly recommended, had satisfied all of the new rigorous procurement standards, had eradicated the stain of sexual misconduct allegations against its former CEO by terminating him several months earlier based on its own internal investigation, and had hired a new experienced CEO with Minnesota roots. [STARTRIB LINK](#). Again, despite all of this appropriate vetting, OCS listened to community concerns when they were raised, and OCS then removed “Our Rescue” from consideration. This is an example of responsive leadership, not a failure of leadership.

8. The Memorandum’s complaints about poor communication between Cmmr. Barnette and the City Council fail to note that under Cmmr. Barnette’s leadership, OCS has been very diligent in

communicating with both the City Council and the public, issuing its bi-monthly public “OCS Dispatch”, providing regular quarterly reports and testimony to the Public Health and Safety Committee, and answering numerous formal requests from the City Council in the form of “Legislative Directives”. I respect and appreciate the frustration that City Council members feel when they don’t get responses as fast as they would like, but the sheer volume of requests for information directed to a multi-faceted department such as OCS will invariably generate some level of such frustration, and I believe the answer is to keep working together rather than to disrupt the continuity of OCS leadership in the hopes that a subsequent leader may be able to substantially reduce these normal frustrations.

9. The Memorandum cites a letter from OCS employees that is critical of the OCS and MPD work environments. It is my view that such complaints cannot be used against Cmmr. Barnette without proper vetting. Employee complaints about matters mentioned in their letter should be made not to the City Council, but to the appropriate Human Resources office. Otherwise it is too easy to politicize the issue of employee satisfaction (as the Memorandum is in fact doing), and the accused persons are denied the benefits of a proper investigation by a neutral office following proper due process protocols.

CONCLUSION: Our city still has a long way to go on the road to public safety reform, and the City Council’s constructive oversight is critical to this effort. But the City Council also must re-confirm Cmmr. Barnette out of respect for the vote of confidence that the re-election of Mayor Frey showed for his ability to choose the best available public safety leadership to keep us on that road. In doing this, the City Council will help to support the stability and continuity of leadership that is so critical to our long term progress.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John A. Satorius".

John Satorius

Cc: City Council, Mayor Frey, Cmmr. Barnette