Nashville Community Review Board
Newsletter
Fall 2026

A Message from the Executive Director



Greetings Nashville!

It's been a while, and I want to begin simply by saying "Thank You." Thank you for staying connected, for showing up to our events, for standing with us through difficult times, and for being a steady partner through so many years of uncertainty.

This past year has been a busy one for us, as we've worked to build our agency and expand our services — all so the voices of our community are heard in every room we walk into. I know it can feel, at times, like we're fighting a battle with no end in sight. But I believe with my whole heart that we have to keep pushing forward. When times get hard, we don't stop and stand still — we move. And that's exactly what we've been doing. As you read through this newsletter, you'll see that movement for yourself. Whether it's sharing information on drones and how they impact our communities, explaining how, why, and when MNPD uses force on civilians, or showing up at community events to educate the public on our services — we are committed to keeping Nashville and Davidson County informed, every step of the way.

So please, stay connected. Subscribe to our newsletter, and share our work with the people in your life. We're grateful to have you with us.

With gratitude,
Jill Fitcheard
Executive Director

Feature: When the First Responder is a Drone

This spring, Nashville police began testing drones that respond to emergencies and other calls for service. Below is an overview of MNPD's plan for deploying Skydio drones as first responders, and the questions it raises about the future of surveillance in Nashville.



On May 26th, 2026, the Metro Nashville Police Department launched a "Drone as First Responder" (DFR) trial program. Using three drones on loan from the manufacturer Skydio, the program was designed to test the idea that drones can reach the scene of a call for service—from a traffic crash to a reported person with a weapon—faster than a patrol car. All flights occurred within a two-mile radius of the Madison precinct, while the drones were piloted remotely from MNPD's Community Safety Center.

Supporters of DFR programs point to sharply reduced response times as a huge benefit of the technology. A report from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) noted that in one department, drones reached scenes in an average of 88 seconds- about 48% faster than the typical officer response. But a drone is not a patrol car. It can record and transmit video, thermal imaging, and location data, and it can cover far more ground,and observe far more, than a single officer at a scene. MNPD's own policy also authorizes DFR for a wide range of everyday calls, not just emergencies. A tool with such broad applications raises a threshold question about how the technology should be classified and who should have to approve it.

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The central question: do drones deployed as 'first responders' count as surveillance technology? If so, should the program have gone before Metro Council before launch?

Metro Code 13.08.080 requires Council approval before the city acquires or deploys new surveillance technology. However, the DFR program did not go before Council before the trial program launched. When community members raised concerns, Mayor Freddie O'Connell, Metro Legal, and MNPD stated that the program qualifies for an exemption covering temporary use tied to criminal investigations. Community members and some council members dispute that reading, in part because the ordinance at the time did not define "temporary use."

However, some council members recently put forth legislation to settle these ambiguities. Filed July 28 by Councilmember Sandra Sepulveda and twelve co-sponsors, BL2026-1498 defines the terms "unmanned aircraft system" and "Drone as First Responder program", and narrows the scope of the exemption clause surrounding temporary use of the technology. Temporary use for a criminal investigation remains exempt, but the exemption no longer applies to any use that is ongoing and extends beyond a specific circumstance, including pilot programs as an example. Permanent acquisition or routine deployment of drones will now require Council approval by resolution after a public hearing.

Furthermore, under the new "temporary use" terms, MNPD can send a drone only to active shooter incidents, hostage situations, and searches for missing persons; and can deploy drones during declared emergencies (such as a natural disaster) for up to ten days. Any surveillance equipment on board must stay disabled until the drone is on the scene of the call it was sent to, and facial recognition, autonomous flight, and operation by anyone outside Metro government is prohibited. The bill passed on its third and final reading on September 1st.

Importantly, this is not the first time Nashville has had this debate. In 2024, Metro Council rejected an expansion of MNPD's contract with FUSUS that would have let the department build a network of public and private cameras called the "Community Safety Camera Network." Resident concern led Council to add guardrails to 13.08.080 for any future camera network, including a public map of city cameras, a facial recognition ban, access logging, and quarterly audits.



IIn many ways, the DFR trial program conversation is a continuation of the surveillance debate. Skydio's drones are built to plug directly into a real-time crime center, feeding aerial video into a single hub alongside license plate readers, computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems, and other tools.

Data sharing is a related concern. MNPD's policy allows drone footage to be released to other law enforcement agencies for "legitimate law enforcement purposes" with a program manager's approval. Community members have specifically asked how this could intersect with federal immigration enforcement, given reporting that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) already operates Skydio drones elsewhere. Although MNPD does not have jurisdiction over federal immigration efforts, the policy leaves open questions about what a data request from another agency would require of them.

MNPD's DFR policy also includes some internal safeguards: it bans the drones from using weapons and facial recognition, purges non-evidentiary footage after seven days, and commits to quarterly audits and ongoing community engagement. To help residents understand this new technology and how it may be used in Nashville, the NCRB has published an Informational Report on the Drone as a First Responder trial program. You can read it on the NCRB's Informational Reports page on our website here: **NCRB Informational Reports**

UPDATE ON THE WHISTLEBLOWER COMPLAINT

Our team has released a new informational report examining Butler Snow's investigation into the 61-page whistleblower complaint filed against MNPD in 2024. In this overview, we break down the firm's key findings, highlight areas that warrant further clarification, and identify questions still remaining for community oversight. The report is designed to help readers understand the investigative process, evaluate the conclusions, and stay informed about ongoing accountability efforts within MNPD. We encourage stakeholders and community members to review the full analysis and engage with the material. Scan the QR code or read the report on the Informational Reports tab on our website here: **NCRB Informational Reports**

Compliance Corner

UPHOLDING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS: A CASE STUDY IN COMMUNICATION AND CONDUCT

In March 2024, a formal complaint was filed regarding an officer's conduct during a traffic incident. The case highlights the critical importance of language, emotional regulation, and the distinction between procedural requirements and professional expectations.

The Allegations:
The complainant alleged that the officer was discourteous and discriminatory during their interaction. Specifically, the complainant reported that the officer addressed him as "Dog" and made a dismissive reference to "the projects." When the complainant expressed offense, the officer reportedly stated, "That's how I talk to everyone in the projects." Additionally, the complainant alleged a violation of his civil rights because the officer did not provide the other driver's information immediately at the scene.

Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) Findings:
The case was referred to OPA for a detailed investigation. The findings are as follows:

Self-Control and Courtesy (Sustained): The investigation confirmed the officer used profanity and was argumentative. The officer admitted to the profanity, citing that he was "stressed out in my own head handling this call." Because the profanity coincided with an argumentative tone, a violation of the Self-Control policy was sustained.

Civil Rights / Obstruction (Not Sustained): Regarding the withholding of the other driver's information, OPA determined that the officer intended to include all details in the final crash report. Since the immediate receipt of this information at the scene is not a legal civil right, the allegation of a civil rights violation was not sustained.

LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

This incident serves as a vital reminder that professionalism is required even under stress.

Language Matters: Terms like "Dog" or references to "the projects" can be perceived as biased and disrespectful, regardless of the officer's intent. Officers are expected to use professional titles and address individuals with dignity.

Emotional Regulation: Being "stressed out" does not excuse the use of profanity or argumentative behavior. Maintaining self-control is a core competency of law enforcement.

Clear Communication: While the officer was within his rights to defer the exchange of information to a formal report, clearer communication about how and when the complainant would receive that information might have prevented the escalation of the encounter.

NCRB's goal is to ensure that every contact with the public reinforces our commitment to Fair and Impartial Policing. To read the full report scan the QR Code and go to Case# CC2024-030.
You can also go to the CRR page on our website here: NCRB Compliance Review Reports



Research Review



NCRB 2026 ANNUAL USE OF FORCE REPORT

On October 26th, the NCRB Research Team will present the final draft of the 2026 Annual Use of Force Report to the Community Review Board at the monthly Board meeting. Board members will receive a presentation overview of the report and vote on whether to approve its findings and recommendations.

Our 2026 Use of Force Report offers a comprehensive look at how the Metro Nashville Police Department used force during 2024 and 2025, drawing on an analysis of 1,661 officer-level force interactions involving 813 subjects of force. Among its findings: force continues to fall disproportionately on Black Nashvillians, who made up 57% of subjects despite comprising approximately 26% of the city's population; the most common force types were soft empty-hand control, Taser deployment, and takedowns; and use-of-force incidents were most concentrated in the Central, South, and North precincts. The report also assesses MNPD's progress on the NCRB's recommendations from the 2024 Use of Force Report, evaluates MNPD's use-of-force policies against NACOLE's best-practice standards, and issues eight new recommendations for 2026.

If approved, the final report will be published and made available to the public on the Policy Advisory Reports tab on the NCRB website.

We encourage all community members to read the report and stay engaged with the work of the NCRB moving forward. Your voice is our mission.

Thank you to everyone who attended our Public Forum on August 10th. Community members wishing to review the current draft may request a copy by contacting NCRB Senior Research Analyst Ansley Potter at Ansley.Potter@Nashville.gov.

Community Connection

BACK TO SCHOOL BASH 2026



We are excited to share the success of the 2nd Annual Back to School Bash held at the South Inglewood Community Center on August 1st. This year's Back to School Bash was our most exciting and impactful event yet! Thanks to the amazing support of our partners, volunteers, and families, we delivered a day full of resources, fun, and community connection. We were excited to collaborate with **Inglewood Elementary School, South Inglewood Community Center, and Creative Girls Rock,** whose partnership helped bring energy and accessibility to this year's event. Families, students, volunteers, and community partners enjoyed a meaningful and energetic day filled with free backpacks and school sup enjoyed plies, food, haircuts, music, games, activities, and giveaways. *(Cont'd on next page)*









We extend our sincere appreciation to each community partner, volunteer, and community member who contributed to making this event a success. Your collaboration and commitment helped create a welcoming, supportive environment that empowers students and strengthens our community. Thank you again to our community partners:

- Community Safety – Behavioral Health & Wellness
- Isaac Litton STEM Magnet Middle School
- McGruder Family Resource Center
- Nashville Skyline Pediatric Dentistry
- WeGo Public Transit



Our Impact This Year

This event truly made a difference:

- **Over 160 parents pre-registered their students**, showing strong community interest and need.
- We connected with **more than 300 families** throughout the day.
- **Hundreds of students received backpacks and essential school supplies,** helping them start the school year prepared, confident, and supported.
- We collected **over 40 community surveys,** giving us valuable insight into residents' experiences and perspectives on policing, public safety, and community engagement - information that will guide our future programming and outreach efforts.

Upcoming Events

October 3rd 10AM-6PM	**Nashville Cultural Festival - Centennial Park**
October 29th 3:30-5:30PM	**Metro Parks Halloween - Cleveland Center**
October 30th 3-6PM	**Spooktacular - Juvenile Court**



Join Us as a Volunteer!

We're excited to continue building on our successes, and we are always looking for passionate volunteers to help us deepen our community impact. Whether you're interested in supporting future events, community outreach, engagement activities, or youth-focused initiatives, we would love to have you on our volunteer team.

Together, we can continue strengthening community relationships and creating meaningful experiences for families across Nashville. For more information contact us at demica.robinson@nashville.gov

Welcome to the Team

We are excited to announce that Evan Swafford has joined our team. Evan will serve in a new position as our Leadership Operations Partner. He will play a vital role in making sure the department runs efficiently and brings invaluable insight and experience in leadership teams to the role.



APPLY TO JOIN THE BOARD!

The Community Review Board has TWO UPCOMING VACANCIES. All Davidson County residents are eligible to apply to serve on the board. If you have a passion for public safety, and believe that transparency and accountability are essential to building trust between MNPD and the community, then you may be an excellent fit for the CRB.
Scan the QR code to link to the application:

HOW WE WORK

THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

We exist to serve your interests, and we rely on your strength and unified desire to make Nashville safer. Through complaints you let us know what isn't working; through commendations you let us know what is; and through engagement at our board meetings and events you show us, the MNPD, and the Metro Council that you demand transparency and accountability on policing issues.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

1. Attend Board Meetings! Our monthly meetings usually occur on the 4th Monday of every month.
2. Volunteer! We need volunteers to help us promote our services and advocate for us at public events.
3. Engage on Social Media! Interacting with us and sharing our content is a simple but powerful way to help us make Nashville a safer city.

COMPLAINT PROCESS

01. INTAKE

When a person reaches out by phone, in-person, online, or through email, our team registers the complaint and sends it to a compliance monitor.

02. INITIAL REVIEW

Our compliance monitors verify the information and work with the complainant to understand the process. We then forward the complaint to the Office of Professional Accountability (OPA).

03. FINAL REVIEW

After the OPA completes its investigation, our team reviews the evidence to ensure a fair, accurate, and transparent outcome. Then, a compliance report is sent to the board.

04. RECOMMENDATIONS

The CRB analyzes the report and makes recommendations to the Chief of Police regarding further investigation, policy issues, and/or needed research.

To review our findings on all of our cases, please visit the Compliance Review Reports page on our website: https://nashville.gov/ncrb or scan the QR Code

YOUR VOICE
OUR MISSION
Nashville Community Review Board

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