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Dear Community Stakeholders,

The Greater Grand Rapids NAACP Branch hereby requests the City of Grand Rapids to restart the Grand Rapids Police Department's (GRPD) chief selection process with a different staffing consultant and truly community-centered screening and selection processes.

Although community members were involved in establishing the profile and desired characteristics for the screening and selection of the new police chief, they were not involved in screening individuals who best matched these criteria. Moreover, community members were not involved in the review and selection of the top candidates who participated in the Police Chief Candidate Community Forum. It is imperative that community members—especially those who live in neighborhoods where there are high levels of negative interactions with GRPD like the Third Ward—are substantively involved in making decisions related to the screening and selection of the new police chief. Because these community members are the closest to the problems between community members and GRPD, they are also the closest to the solutions.

In the recent years, GRPD has engaged in discriminatory policing tactics such as harassing community members in the Third Ward with helicopters for surveillance purposes; an officer pointing his firearm at two Latino teenagers over a mistaken identity; and an officer punching an unarmed Black man in the head several times during a routine traffic stop. These and other actions have resulted in GRPD losing trust and confidence from the community members it is supposed to serve. Accordingly, the screening and selection of all candidates must consider Grand Rapids' challenging history of community-police relations. The current top candidates are all men with only one person of color and, thus, it is obvious that the screening and selection processes were not successful in establishing a pool of diverse top candidates. There would have been more diversity if community members were substantively involved in the screening and selection processes.

Moreover, the top candidates are not aligned with the profile and desired characteristics expressed by community members. For instance, during the Police Chief Candidate Community Forum, Chief Jim Blocker from the Battle Creek Police Department stated that he is not aware of the CURE Violence program. This is a red flag for community members since a major aspect of GRPD's 2021-2022 Strategic Plan is collaborating with the Grand Rapids CURE Violence program to curb the ongoing problem of gun violence in Grand Rapids. It is disappointing that a top candidate for the new police chief is not even aware of the CURE Violence program considering the City Manager's emphasis of this program and its significant role in addressing public safety going forward. Chief Blocker also stated during the Police Chief Candidate Community Forum that within the past 60 days the Battle Creek Police Department had 3 critical incidents; at least 2 of which include officer-involved shootings. This raises another red flag for community members and calls into question Chief Blocker's capability as a leader to ensure that officers use de-escalation techniques and other mitigating mechanisms so that lethal force is only used as a necessary and last resort.

Likewise, Commander Eric Winstrom from the Chicago Police Department stated that he supports law enforcement's use of ShotSpotter and would encourage its use in Grand Rapids. This is a red flag for community members since community members and county and city level lawmakers successfully stopped Police Chief Payne's efforts to use federal and local funds to purchase and use ShotSpotter. It is telling that a top candidate would explicitly state support for ShotSpotter even though it has recently



NAACP

GREATER GRAND RAPIDS BRANCH

Chartered in 1919

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been shown to be very unpopular with community members and lawmakers. Especially since Chicago's Inspector General's Office recently published its report on the ineffectiveness of ShotSpotter in addressing gun violence and solving gun violence crimes. This report, however, did demonstrate that the Chicago Police Department's use of ShotSpotter does encourage the over policing of specific communities (such as Black and Latino communities).

Lastly, Jutiki Jackson, although the only candidate of color, killed a Latino in an officer-involved shooting when he was an officer at the Milwaukee Police Department. Considering the recent challenges between GRPD and Black and Latino community members (especially community members from the Third Ward) such as the ongoing investigation of GRPD by the Michigan Civil Rights Department for violating the constitutional rights of community members, a police chief with this record will not garner trust and confidence with these community members. This selection calls the entire screening and selection processes into question, which should have prohibited the consideration of any potential candidate with an employment record that includes an officer-involved death(s) and/or allegations of violating a person's constitutional rights such as excessive use of force.

Given the lack of community involvement in the screening and selection processes and the lack of diversity in the pool of top candidates for the new police chief of GRPD, the City of Grand Rapids should restart GRPD's chief selection process with a different staffing consultant that has a proven track record of substantive involvement of community members in the screening and selection processes.

The Greater Grand Rapids Branch of the NAACP requests/demands that the criteria for the selection of GRPD's chief should require the candidates to have:

- 1) The characteristics listed in the NAACP Model Police Chief document provided to the City of Grand Rapids on October 8, 2021;
- 2) an extensive background in improving community-police relations; and
- 3) a commitment to implementing the 21st Century Policing Task Force Report's recommendations.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cle J. Jackson, President of Greater Grand Rapids NAACP Branch

Carlton T. Mayers, II, Esq., Special Advisor for Public Safety