SUMMARY REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Date of Incident:	April 1, 2019
Time of Incident:	6:38 am
Location of Incident:	5100 S. Western Avenue
Date of COPA Notification:	April 1, 2019
Time of COPA Notification:	11:23 am

This allegation details an incident that took place at approximately 6:38 AM on April 1, 2019. The accorded carry licensee ('CCL') who was armed, alleges that following a 911 call for police service for a minor traffic accident he was involved in, Officer Fuller arrived on the accident scene and unlawfully confiscated Mr. The firearm. Mr. The also alleges Officer Fuller placed his hand on his service weapon without lawful justification.

II. INVOLVED PARTIES

Involved Officer #1:	Melvin Fuller #18534, Emp# Date of Appointment 10/03/94; Rank: Police officer Unit of Assignment: 009; DOB 66; Male, Black
Involved Individual #1:	DOB 69; Male Hispanic

III. ALLEGATIONS

Officer	Allegation	Finding / Recommendation
Officer Fuller	1. On or about April 1, 2019, at or near 5100 S. Western Avenue, Officer Fuller displayed his firearm in the presence of without justification	
	2. On or about April 1, 2019, at or near 5100 S. Western Avenue, the he Accused unlawfully disarmed who	Exonerated

had a valid concealed carry permit and valid FOID card.

IV. APPLICABLE RULES AND LAWS

Rules

- 1.Rule 2—Any action or conduct which impedes the Department's efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department
- 2.Rule 3—Any failure to promote the Department's efforts to implement its policy or accomplish its goals.
- 3. Rule 8—Disrespect to or maltreatment of any person, while on or off duty
- 4.Rule 9—Engaging in any unjustified verbal or physical altercation with any person, while on or off duty.
- 3.Rule 38—Unlawful or unnecessary display of a weapon

General Orders

1. G04-01: Preliminary Investigations

Special Orders

1. S06-05-02 Firearm Concealed Carry Act

Federal Laws

1. US Constitution, Fourth Amendment

State Laws

1. Firearm Concealed Carry Act 430 ILCS 66

V. INVESTIGATION

a. Interviews

Interview	Λf	ı
	OI.	

Mr. gave his statement to COPA on April 5, 2019. In his statement, Mr. described having his minivan damaged in a minor accident while he was driving his wife and daughters to the CTA Orange Line train station. The at-fault party in the accident did not feel comfortable exchanging insurance information without the police present, so called 911 for police to be dispatched to the scene. The response to the accident seemed to be taking a while, so he called 911 a second time. In this call, he told the 911 operator that he was a concealed carry license ('CCL') holder and that he had his firearm on him. Mr. believed he was doing the right thing by alerting the police in advance that he was lawfully armed. He also added that the husband of the woman whose vehicle struck Mr. van was now at the scene and that he was irate.

A few minutes later, an African American Department member, now known to be Officer Fuller, arrived on the scene. Officer Fuller began loudly asking "where is the gun, who has the gun?" Mr. approached Officer Fuller with his driver's information and CCL permit in hand, at which time Officer Fuller placed his hand on his service weapon. Officer Fuller then treated him like a criminal, making him place his hands on the roof of minimizer while Officer Fuller looked for the firearm. Mr. described being physically forced to put his hands on his car by Officer Fuller, who then took his unholstered XDM 9 mm out of his hooded sweatshirt pocket and kept it for the duration of the interaction. Mr. demanded a supervisor come to the scene because he believed that Officer Fuller had violated his Constitutional rights by disarming him.

When Sgt. Bailey arrived Mr. Look told him that Officer Fuller did not have a right to take his gun from his person and disagreed that Officer Fuller, or any police officer, could do so. He demanded that Officer Fuller return his weapon to him the way that he took it. Officer Fuller put the gun back into Mr. Look pocket. Officer Fuller then backed up and put his hand on his service weapon. Mr. Look then thanked the sergeant and the female officers and went back to his car and got inside. He indicated that he was still angry and upset about the encounter and that his kids were also traumatized.

² Att.#1 at 6:11 mark

¹ Att.#1

Interview of Officer Melvin Fuller³

Officer Melvin Fuller was interviewed by COPA on Aug. 29, 2019. Officer Fuller described being dispatched to the scene of a minor traffic accident located at 5100 S. Western Avenue. Initially, the call was a simple traffic accident, but while in en route, Officer Fuller was advised that an individual on the scene was an armed conceal carry license holder, and that one of the involved parties felt threatened. When Officer Fuller arrived, he approached and began to inquire about the firearm, and was prioritizing securing the weapon, given the potential volatility of the situation. Not knowing if Mr. was the person who had the concealed firearm, he instructed Mr. to submit to a pat down while Mr. was trying to explain that he was the one with the firearm.

Officer Fuller located and recovered the firearm from Mr. right hooded sweatshirt pocket where Mr. had stored it without a holster. Officer Fuller placed it in his Department vehicle while trying to conduct the accident investigation. Mr. was angry that Officer Fuller had taken his weapon and was becoming more belligerent, insulting Officer Fuller and telling him he was going to get fired for this. Mr. conduct was preventing Officer Fuller from investigating the accident, so Officer Fuller then went to his vehicle to run Mr. information, while assisting units stayed by the minivan with Mr. Mr. continued to insult and belittle Officer Fuller and then demanded a supervisor come to the scene. Officer Fuller radioed for a sergeant and Sgt. Thomas Bailey responded to the scene. Sgt. Bailey disagreed with Officer Fuller's view that Mr. was required to carry the gun in a holster but agreed that Officer Fuller was within policy to briefly confiscate the firearm during the investigation.

Officer Fuller was asked why he took his weapon out of the holster when he returned firearm to him and he indicated he did so for his safety and the safety of other Department members. Officer Fuller indicated that he was wary of giving a loaded gun back to an angry individual wanted to be prepared for the unexpected given the volatility of the situation. Officer Fuller didn't believe that Mr. saw him unholster his weapon and hold it pointing downward on his right side.

b. Digital Evidence

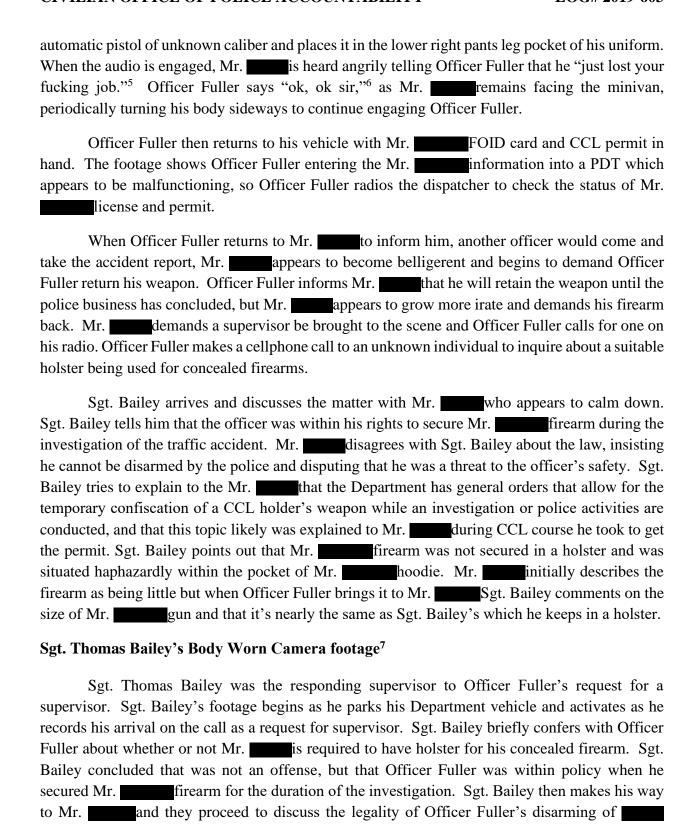
Officer Fuller's Body Worn Camera footage⁴

BWC footage taken from Officer Fuller's camera shows Mr. approaching Officer Fuller with his vehicle registration and some identification cards. There's no sound as Officer Fuller had yet to switch his BWC from standby mode. Officer Fuller can be seen positioning Mr. minivan and place his hands-on top of it. Officer Fuller places his hand on Mr. right side, then into the right jacket pocket of Mr. hoodie. Officer Fuller does not appear to conduct a search of Mr. and does not touch Mr. more after securing the firearm. Officer Fuller retrieves what appears to be an unholstered semi-

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³ Att.#9

⁴ Att.#11 and 12



⁵ Att.#11 at the 7:05:15 mark

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⁶ Att.#11 at the 7:05:25 mark

⁷ Att.#12

Officer Fuller is not visible or audible for most of their discussion. After a few minutes, Sgt. Bailey instructs Officer Fuller to return Mr. firearm, to which Officer Fuller initially suggests placing in the glovebox of minivan. declines, insisting that Officer Fuller return the weapon to his hooded sweatshirt pocket. For the first time, Mr. gun is visible and Sgt. Bailey remarks "that's a big gun, sir!" and compares it to his Department issue weapon. Sgt. Bailey suggests that Mr. get a holster for that gun to hold it more securely. Mr. agrees to look into it.

Officer Ramona Bedoy Body Worn Camera footage9

Officer Ramona Bedoy's BWC footage begins shortly after she and her partner, Officer Veronica Coffee, pull into the Currency Exchange near 5100 S. Western Avenue. They are heard getting the event number for the call. Upon exiting the Department vehicle, Officer Fuller and Mr. can be seen interacting with each other less than a foot apart in front of a white minivan. Mr. places his hands atop the roof of the minivan. Officer Fuller's weapon is still in its holster on his right side and his right hand is touching Mr. back. Mr. sis holding a series of papers in his left hand while holding both hands atop the minivan. Officer Fuller then begins to pat down Mr. with his right hand, while describes where his concealed firearm is located. Officer Fuller feels the firearm, places his right hand inside the right hooded sweatshirt pocket of and pulls out the firearm. Officer Fuller place's Mr. firearm in the thigh pocket of his uniform and is heard stating loudly "That's why! That's why!" firearm in the thigh pocket of his uniform and is heard stating loudly "That's why! That's why!" as Mr. tries to show him his paperwork. replies, "don't scream at me, don't scream at me, I'm not a fucking criminal," to which Officer Fuller replies "I understand that. I understand that. I don't know what your intentions are."

Officer Bedoy's footage mirrors Officer Fuller's footage as described until Officer Fuller walks out of view.

Officer Veronica Coffee Body Worn Camera footage¹²

Officer Coffee's BWC footage is substantially similar to Officer Bedoy's footage as described above.

Third Party Cellphone Video footage shot by family 13

⁸ Att.#11 at 7:43:02 mark

⁹ Att.#13

¹⁰ Att.#13 at 7:04:49 mark

¹¹ Att.#13 at 7:04:54 mark

¹² Att.#14

¹³ Att.#15

Footage shot by one of Mr. relatives begins with Sgt. Bailey already on the scene Officer Fuller is not initially visible, and Mr. back is to the camera. The family is heard discussing the situation and whether or not the audio is being picked up. Officer Fuller appears when Sgt. Bailey inquires if Mr. see is ready to leave and at which time, they will return his firearm. Officer Fuller is heard initially offering to place the gun in insists on having the gun returned to him in the same manner in which it was taken. Sgt. Bailey instructs Officer Fuller to comply and Officer Fuller places the gun in right hooded sweatshirt pocket. Officer Fuller then appears to take several steps backwards and disappears out of view. Sgt. Bailey continues talking to him for about half a minute before shaking hand and Mr. then walks back to his car. Mr. gets back inside his car and is heard stating "fucking (inaudible),"14. **OEMC** phone calls and Zone Radio traffic The first call placed to OEMC is placed by Mr. at 6:36 am. 15 The call lasts for 1:58 seconds and in it complains that someone has hit his minivan while backing up without looking, and that the person doesn't appear to speak English and may try to flee the scene. At **6:53** am, ¹⁶ the second call is from Mr. and he's requesting an estimated time of arrival from CPD because the husband of the woman who hit his car is now at the scene and being combative. The operator asks if the man is threatening Mr. to which he indicates he is not, but he's talking loudly like he will eventually do something. also indicates that he has concealed carry weapon on him and that he has gotten back in his own vehicle with the doors locked. The operator confirms with that he does indeed have his weapon on him and makes a note of it in the dispatch. At 6:55 am, ¹⁷ a Spanish-speaking woman calls 911 and the OEMC dispatcher puts an interpreter on the call. According to the dialogue, this is the other party involved in the traffic accident with Mr. At 7:21 am, ¹⁸ Mr. Calls 911 seeking a supervisor to be dispatched to the same location as the original call. complains that he was disarmed, patted down, and threatened by the male officer who arrived on the scene of the accident. This happened despite having his current paperwork for CCL, FOID card and driver's license. The dispatcher informs a supervisor

Zone 13 Radio traffic on April 1, 2019 from 6:36 am to 7:36 am¹⁹

will be responding shortly.

¹⁴ Att.#15 at 12:05:40 mark

¹⁵ Att.#16

¹⁶ Att.#18

¹⁷ Att.#20

¹⁸ Att.#22

¹⁹ Att.#24

At the **21:23** mark, the OEMC operator dispatches Bt. 931 (Officer Fuller) to the accident at 5100 S. Western and informs him that the husband of the other driver has arrived on the scene and of the presence of concealed weapon.

At the **31:42** mark, Bt. 931asks the OEMC operator to run license. The operator comes back to tell Bt. 931 that the license is valid as well as the CCL.

At the **33:56 mark**, Bt. 931 requests a sergeant/supervisor to respond to the scene. Bt 910 (Sgt. Bailey responds)

c. Physical Evidence

N/A

d. Documentary Evidence

OEMC Event Query #1909102866²⁰ records that at 6:36 am on April 1, 2019, a call came into OEMC regarding an auto accident with property damage. At 6:59 am, Beat 931 which was assigned to Officer Fuller was dispatched to the scene. The remarks contained in the Event Query details information about a CCL holder being present at the scene was relayed to Officer Fuller as the report that an "irate husband" of one of the parties involved on the accident was on the scene.

The Firearm Owners Identification ('FOID') Card for indicates that on the date of his interaction with Officer Fuller, possessed a valid FOID card which has an issuance date of 12/27/2016 and an expiration date of 02/01/2024.

The Concealed Carry License ('CCL') for indicates that on the date of his interaction with Officer Fuller, possessed a valid CCL permit with an issuance date of 12/23/2016 and an expiration date of 12/23/2021.

VI. LEGAL STANDARD

For each Allegation COPA must make one of the following findings:

- 1. Sustained where it is determined the allegation is supported by a preponderance of the evidence;
- 2. <u>Not Sustained</u> where it is determined there is insufficient evidence to prove the allegations by a preponderance of the evidence;

²¹ Att.#8

²⁰ Att.#26

²² Att.#6

- 3. <u>Unfounded</u> where it is determined by clear and convincing evidence that an allegation is false or not factual; or
- 4. <u>Exonerated</u> where it is determined by clear and convincing evidence that the conduct described in the allegation occurred, but it is lawful and proper.

A **preponderance of evidence** can be described as evidence indicating that it is **more likely than not** that the conduct occurred and violated Department policy. *See Avery v. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co.*, 216 Ill. 2d 100, 191 (2005), (a proposition is proved by a preponderance of the evidence when it has found to be more probably true than not). If the evidence gathered in an investigation establishes that it is more likely that the misconduct occurred, even if by a narrow margin, then the preponderance of the evidence standard is met.

Clear and convincing evidence is a higher standard than a preponderance of the evidence but lower than the "beyond-a-reasonable doubt" standard required to convict a person of a criminal offense. See *e.g.*, *People v. Coan*, 2016 IL App (2d) 151036 (2016). Clear and Convincing can be defined as a "degree of proof, which, considering all the evidence in the case, produces the firm and abiding belief that it is highly probable that the proposition . . . is true." *Id.* at ¶ 28.

VII. ANALYSIS

The core of Mr. allegations is that Officer Fuller disarmed the Mr. unlawfully when Mr. informed Officer Fuller that he was a concealed carry license holder and was presently armed. Mr. believes this disarmament was a violation of his Constitutional rights and life-threatening misconduct, given that Officer Fuller placed his hand on his service weapon. Mr. believes if he had resisted disarmament, a shoot-out could have occurred that would have endangered his family member's lives.

Allegation #1: Was the unlawfully disarmed?

Officer safety for the duration of a contact between the officer and an armed citizen, is the goal of the Illinois Concealed Carry Act and S06-05-02. It is not an unlawful intrusion upon Mr. rights for him to have to surrender his firearm during an encounter with law enforcement. The reasons articulated, by both Officer Fuller and Sgt. Bailey, are consistent with S06-05-02 and the somewhat volatile nature of the incident made it even more imperative for Officer Fuller to secure any firearms that could be used out of anger or frustration about the car accident. Temporarily seizing the firearm allowed Officer Fuller to account for the firearm as being legal and not a threat, as opposed to a weapon Fuller would not know about and gets suddenly introduced into the scenario.

Furthermore, Mr. arguably does not have the weapon securely holstered, choosing to carry the large, fully loaded semi-automatic pistol in the right pocket of his hooded sweatshirt. Sgt. Bailey pointed out to Mr. that weapon was large and that it was comparable to Bailey's

Department-issued firearm. While there is no state law precluding Mr. from carrying his gun in this manner, it allows for the potential for an accidental discharge, should the weapon be jarred from his pocket and fall to the ground. Mr. even cedes this point after calming down while talking to Sgt. Bailey, at one point agreeing to in the future utilizing a holster to secure his weapon.

COPA finds that Officer Fuller's actions, in temporarily confiscating the Mr. firearms, were within current Department policy. Therefore, COPA makes a finding of **EXONERATED** as to Allegation #1.

Allegation #2: Did Officer Fuller unlawfully display his weapon?

Regarding Mr. allegation that Officer Fuller brandished his weapon without lawful justification, there are two instances that Mr. invokes in his statement to COPA. In the first instance, Mr. alleged that Officer Fuller placed his hand atop his weapon in a manner he found threatening. None of the BWC video, showing their first contact with each other, supports that Officer Fuller ever took his weapon out of the holster. The Mr. himself states in his interview that Officer Fuller placed his hand atop his weapon, but never removed it from the holster. There is no existing policy violation that exists for a Department member merely placing their hand upon their service weapon. The conduct that Mr. found offensive is not considered an unnecessary display of a firearm, given that it was still holstered and never pointed at Mr.

Officer Fuller's BWC footage contradicts Mr. account in that when the footage begins, Fuller's right hand is visible and extended as he approaches Mr. Sgt. Bailey's BWC indicates that Officer Fuller's gun is on the right side of his body. Officer Fuller's camera shows he used his right hand to remove Mr. firearm from Mr. right hooded sweatshirt pocket. Based on the available BWC footage, Officer Fuller did not display his firearm in a threatening and unnecessary manner, at that time. Even if this action described by did occur, it does not present a departure from Department policy.

The second instance occurs later, near the end of the interaction, when Officer Fuller returns Mr. firearm to him. The best view of this part of the incident is in Sgt. Bailey's BWC footage, which shows Officer Fuller place Mr. firearm back into his right hooded sweatshirt pocket while simultaneously placing his right hand on his Department-issued firearm. As Mr. places his hand on the firearm, Officer Fuller then takes multiple steps back and unholsters his weapon, pointing it downward and parallel against his right leg. back is turned and he does not appear to see this movement from Officer Fuller happening behind him. Sgt. Baily does not draw his weapon and continues to talk to Mr. about the size of the firearm.

Two factors come into play in assessing Officer Fuller's actions. The first factor is whether or not Mr. saw the alleged unnecessary display, and the second is whether the display was not necessary. Based on the available BWC footage, it is clear that Mr. did not see Officer Fuller's actions nor react to them. It is possible he found out about Officer Fuller's actions later from the cellphone footage his family shot, but that footage does not clearly show Officer Fuller unholstering the firearm and placing it against his right side. In the cellphone footage, Officer Fuller is obscured by a Department vehicle when he steps backwards. If Mr. did not or could not see Officer Fuller putting his hand on his weapon, then it is not possible for him to maintain he was harmed or offended by it.

The second factor is whether Officer Fuller's actions were justified given a threat to his safety and the safety of others nearby. Officer Fuller had just returned a loaded firearm to an angry individual he had a disagreement with moments before. In his statement to COPA, Officer Fuller related that he did not know what Mr. was capable of and giving him back control of loaded firearm within arm's reach left him vulnerable to the unexpected. The BWC footage shows that Officer Fuller did not point the firearm at Mr. or anyone else and kept the gun at his side until Mr. took his hand off his weapon, at which point Fuller re-holstered his weapon. Being in a position where he could readily return fire towards an individual with a gun in his hand is not an unreasonable response given the circumstances of this encounter.

Furthermore, by his own admission, Mr. described himself as being irate and humiliated by his treatment from Officer Fuller. BWC footage captures Mr. using strong language towards Officer Fuller, at one point telling him he's going to "lose his fucking job." Officer Fuller's actions in unholstering his firearm are within policy given the totality of the circumstances.

COPA finds that in both instances, Officer Fuller's handling of his Department firearm were within policy and he did not unnecessarily display his weapon during the incident. Therefore, COPA makes a finding of **EXONERATED** as to Allegation #2.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis set forth above, COPA makes the following findings:

Officer	Allegation	Finding / Recommendation
Officer Fuller	 On or about April 1, 2019, at or near 5100 S. Western Avenue, Officer Fuller 	Exonerated

²³ Att.#11 at 7:05:15

displayed his firearm in the presence of Mr.
without justification

2. On or about April 1, 2019, at or near 5100
S. Western Avenue, Officer Fuller
unlawfully disarmed Mr. who had a
valid concealed carry permit and valid
FOID card.

Approved:



5-21-2020

Angela Hearts-Glass

Deputy Chief Administrator – Chief Investigator

Date

Appendix A

Assigned Investigative Staff

Squad#:12Investigator:Michael FleurySupervising Investigator:Andrew DalkinDeputy Chief Administrator:Angela Hearts-Glass