



Log #2023-0004549

## FINAL SUMMARY REPORT<sup>1</sup>

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 27, 2023, the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) received a complaint in the form of Civil Suit #23L7632, on behalf of ██████████ reporting alleged misconduct by members of the Chicago Police Department (CPD). ██████████ alleged that CPD officers unlawfully arrested him on March 23, 2020, at approximately 2:54 pm, at the Residence Inn by Marriott at 201 E. Walton, inside Room 1503.<sup>2</sup>

Upon review of the evidence, COPA served an allegation that Sgt. Timothy Ronneberg directed profanity at the occupants of the hotel room, including but not limited to using the words “fuck/fucking,” and/or by calling the occupants “idiots” and/or “stupid.” COPA further alleged that Sgt. Ronneberg failed to activate his Body Worn Camera (BWC) during the incident. Following its investigation, COPA determined that CPD did not unlawfully arrest ██████████. COPA reached a sustained finding for the allegation of profanity against Sgt. Ronneberg, and a not sustained finding that Sgt. Ronneberg failed to activate his BWC.

### II. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE<sup>3</sup>

On March 23, 2020, several CPD officers responded to the Residence Inn after a 911 caller reported guns and drugs inside Room 1503.<sup>4</sup> Hotel security escorted CPD to the room, knocked on the door, and told the occupants that the police were there.<sup>5</sup> One of the hotel room occupants opened the door, allowed CPD entry, and gave them permission to search the room.<sup>6</sup> CPD found three firearms<sup>7</sup> inside a bedroom occupied by ██████████<sup>8</sup> ██████████ denied ownership of the guns. As the incident continued, Sgt. Ronneberg repeatedly directed profanities and insults at the other occupants of the hotel room. This included using the words, “fuck”/“fucking,” and calling the hotel room occupants “idiots” and “stupid” when none of them claimed ownership of the firearms.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A includes case identifiers such as the date, time, and location of the incident, the involved parties and their demographics, and the applicable rules and policies.

<sup>2</sup> One or more of these allegations fall within COPA’s jurisdiction pursuant to Chicago Municipal Code 2-78-120. Therefore, COPA determined it would be the primary investigative agency in this matter

<sup>3</sup> The following is a summary of what COPA finds most likely occurred during this incident. This summary utilized information from several different sources, including BWC footage, police reports, a 911 call, ██████████ civil lawsuit, and the interview of Sgt. Ronneberg.

<sup>4</sup> Att. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Att. 7, 04:43 hrs; 05:28 hrs.

<sup>6</sup> Att. 7, 06:45 hrs.

<sup>7</sup> Att. 8, 16:21 hrs; Att. 12, 13:14 hrs and 14:10 hrs.

<sup>8</sup> ██████████ is a paraplegic and was laying on the bed when the police arrived.

██████████ was subsequently taken into custody and transported from the scene. Body Worn Camera (BWC) evidence memorialized Sgt. Ronneberg's remarks.<sup>9</sup>

In his interview with COPA on May 16, 2025, Sgt. Ronneberg stated that he had no independent recollection of the incident.<sup>10</sup> Sgt. Ronneberg viewed the footage from Officer Jose Medina's BWC and confirmed the verbiage that he directed toward the hotel room occupants. He acknowledged, "After watching the video it does appear that I used those words."<sup>11</sup> Sgt. Ronneberg said his actions were not typical,<sup>12</sup> stating, "I do my best to talk professionally to everybody I encounter while in uniform."<sup>13</sup> He also noted, "There's no way for me to know my mindset. I don't know why I used that language."<sup>14</sup> Regarding his BWC, Sgt. Ronneberg stated that he was wearing his BWC and did not know if it malfunctioned or if he failed to activate it.<sup>15</sup>

### III. ALLEGATIONS

#### **Sgt. Timothy Ronneberg:**

1. Directed profanity at the occupants of the hotel room, including but not limited to using the words "fuck"/"fucking," and/or by calling them "idiots" and/or "stupid" during the preliminary investigation.
  - Sustained: Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, 9
2. Failed to activate his Body Worn Camera.
  - Not Sustained

### IV. CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENT

The credibility of an individual relies primarily on two factors: 1) the individual's truthfulness and 2) the reliability of the individual's account. The first factor addresses the honesty of the individual making the statement, while the second factor speaks to their ability to accurately perceive the event at the time of the incident and then accurately recall the event from memory.

In this case, COPA interviewed Sgt. Ronneberg on May 16, 2025. Due to the passage of time, Sgt. Ronneberg did not easily recall the details of the incident, including the language he used with the occupants of the hotel room. Sgt. Ronneberg was provided with the opportunity to view BWC footage from the incident, and he identified himself as the individual speaking with the hotel room occupants. Thus, COPA finds the sergeant's statement regarding his usage of language to be generally credible. This investigation did not reveal any evidence that caused COPA to question the credibility of any of the individuals (sworn or unsworn) who provided statements.

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<sup>9</sup> Att. 11, 29:00 hrs - 34:00 hrs.

<sup>10</sup> Att. 34, 07:20 hrs.

<sup>11</sup> Att. 34, 08:45 hrs - 08:50 hrs.

<sup>12</sup> Att. 34, 12:13 hrs.

<sup>13</sup> Att. 34, 12:04 hrs - 12:11 hrs.

<sup>14</sup> Att. 34, 08:50 hrs - 08:59 hrs.

<sup>15</sup> Att. 34, 14:45 hrs.

## V. ANALYSIS<sup>16</sup>

COPA finds **Allegation #1** against Sgt. Ronneberg, that he directed profanity at the occupants of the hotel room, including but not limited to using the words “fuck”/“fucking,” and/or by calling them “idiots” and/or “stupid,” is **Sustained**. CPD Rules of Conduct list prohibited acts, which include, “Any action or conduct which impedes the Department’s efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department,” “Disrespect to or maltreatment of any person, while on or off duty,” and “Engaging in an unjustified verbal or physical altercation with any person, while on or off duty.”<sup>17</sup> Additionally, CPD policy mandates that “members treat all persons with courtesy and dignity which is inherently due every person as a human being. Department members will act, speak, and conduct themselves in a professional manner ... and maintain a courteous attitude in all contacts with the public.”<sup>18</sup> The policy also states that members “will not exhibit a condescending attitude or direct any derogatory terms toward any person in any manner.”<sup>19</sup>

In this case, Sgt. Ronneberg’s profanities and insults were recorded on BWC. Additionally, while the sergeant had little independent recollection of the incident, he admitted that the video captured him using the language. Based upon the totality of the circumstances, COPA finds that Sgt. Ronneberg repeatedly directed profanity at members of the public, and his actions violated Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9.

COPA finds **Allegation #2** against Sgt. Ronneberg, that he failed to activate his BWC, is **Not Sustained**. Sgt. Ronneberg was wearing his BWC on the date of the incident, but he was unaware if his BWC malfunctioned or if he failed to activate it. Given the fact that more than five years have passed since the date of the incident, and Sgt. Ronneberg has not been disciplined for any BWC violations during that period, COPA finds there is insufficient evidence to determine why Sgt. Ronneberg’s camera did not record the incident. Additionally, COPA notes that the entire interaction was captured on other officers’ BWCs. For these reasons, this allegation is not sustained; however, COPA recommends that Sgt. Ronneberg receive retraining regarding CPD’s BWC policy to ensure that this problem does not recur.

## VI. DISCIPLINARY RECOMMENDATION

### A. Sgt. Ronneberg’s Complimentary and Disciplinary History<sup>20</sup>

Sgt. Ronneberg has been with CPD since March 9, 2009. In that time, he has received 96 various awards, including two department commendations, one field training service award, one honorable mention ribbon award, and two life saving awards. In the last five years, Sgt. Ronneberg

<sup>16</sup> For a definition of COPA’s findings and standards of proof, *see* Appendix B.

<sup>17</sup> CPD Rules of Conduct; *see* Rules 2, 3, 8 and 9.

<sup>18</sup> Att. 40, G02-01 III (B), Human Rights and Resources (effective October 15, 2017, to June 30, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> Att. 40, G02-01 III(D).

<sup>20</sup> Att. 39.

acquired one sustained complaint for verbal abuse profanity, for which he received a reprimand. He has no recent SPAR history.

**i. Recommended Discipline**

Although Sgt. Ronneberg has an impressive complimentary history, he has been disciplined once in the past five years for verbal abuse, which resulted in a reprimand. Based on the totality of the circumstances in this case, as well as the principles of progressive discipline, COPA recommends a **suspension of 1-29 days** and **retraining** regarding CPD’s BWC policy as well as the protection of human rights when interacting with members of the public.

Approved:



6/12/2025

Steffany Hreno  
*Acting Deputy Chief Administrator*

Date

Appendix ACase Details

Date/Time/Location of Incident:	March 23, 2020/ Approx. 2:54pm/201 E. Walton, at the Residence Inn by Marriott, inside Room #1503
Date/Time of COPA Notification	September 27, 2023/5:43pm
Involved Member #1:	Sgt. Timothy Ronneberg/Star #1116/ Employee ID # [REDACTED] Date of Appointment: March 9, 2009, Unit of Assignment: 018/Detailed to 145/Male/White
Involved Individual #1:	[REDACTED] Male/Black

Applicable Rules

- Rule 2:** Any action or conduct which impedes the Department's efforts to achieve its policy and goals or brings discredit upon the Department.
- Rule 3:** Any failure to promote the Department's efforts to implement its policy or accomplish its goals.
- Rule 5:** Failure to perform any duty.
- Rule 6:** Disobedience of an order or directive, whether written or oral.
- Rule 8:** Disrespect to or maltreatment of any person, while on or off duty.
- Rule 9:** Engaging in any unjustified verbal or physical altercation with any person, while on or off duty.
- Rule 10:** Inattention to duty.
- Rule 14:** Making a false report, written or oral.
- Rule 38:** Unlawful or unnecessary use or display of a weapon.

Applicable Policies and Laws

- G02-01, Human Rights and Resources (effective October 15, 2017, to June 30, 2022).

## Appendix B

### **Definition of COPA’s Findings and Standards of Proof**

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. Not Sustained – where it is determined there is insufficient evidence to prove the allegations by a preponderance of the evidence;
3. Unfounded – where it is determined by clear and convincing evidence that an allegation is false or not factual; or
4. Exonerated – 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 a proposition is proved.<sup>21</sup> For example, if the evidence gathered in an investigation establishes that it is more likely that the conduct complied with CPD policy than that it did not, 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. 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.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> 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 is found to be more probably true than not).

<sup>22</sup> *People v. Coan*, 2016 IL App (2d) 151036, ¶ 28 (quoting Illinois Pattern Jury Instructions, Criminal, No. 4.19 (4<sup>th</sup> ed. 2000)).

**Appendix C**

**Transparency and Publication Categories**

Check all that apply:

- Abuse of Authority
- Body Worn Camera Violation
- Coercion
- Death or Serious Bodily Injury in Custody
- Domestic Violence
- Excessive Force
- Failure to Report Misconduct
- False Statement
- Firearm Discharge
- Firearm Discharge – Animal
- Firearm Discharge – Suicide
- Firearm Discharge – Unintentional
- First Amendment
- Improper Search and Seizure – Fourth Amendment Violation
- Incidents in Lockup
- Motor Vehicle Incidents
- OC Spray Discharge
- Search Warrants
- Sexual Misconduct
- Taser Discharge
- Unlawful Denial of Access to Counsel
- Unnecessary Display of a Weapon
- Use of Deadly Force – other
- Verbal Abuse
- Other Investigation