



CITY OF CHICAGO
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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Recommendation to Reopen Chicago Police Department Disciplinary Investigation

CPD Log #2022-0005718

OIG Case #C2025-0000000237

Published December 3, 2025

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Pursuant to the Municipal Code of Chicago (MCC) § 2-56-230(c)(ii), the Public Safety section of the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducts reviews of individual closed disciplinary investigations conducted by the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and the Chicago Police Department's (CPD) Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA). Based on those reviews, OIG may make a recommendation to reopen the investigation to address a deficiency materially affecting its outcome.

COPA investigated allegations that CPD Officers Bret Hon, Star #6214, Steven Sreniawski, Star #2878, and Michael Tanon, Star #6300, stopped, arrested, and conducted a strip search of the complainant without justification, related to the alleged sale of narcotics. COPA reached a finding of Not Sustained on the improper stop and arrest of the complainant, and unfounded the allegation that the accused CPD members conducted a strip search.

OIG's review of police reports and video evidence revealed that COPA concluded that the arrest of the complainant was justified, based on facts the officers did not possess at the time of arrest nor would have possessed if it were not for the improper search. Further, COPA did not consider the facts stated in its credibility assessment that the amount of cannabis and currency found on the complainant did not suggest the complainant was selling narcotics at the time of arrest.

OIG recommended that COPA reopen the investigation to ensure its analysis of the probable cause for arrest of the complainant aligned with the circumstances known to the involved officers at the time of the complainant's arrest and did not rely on evidence obtained as a result of that arrest.

In response to OIG's recommendations, COPA reopened its investigation, determined that the CPD members had probable cause to arrest the complainant, despite its assertion that "video footage does not clearly depict the underlying conduct that provided probable cause for the arrest," found "insufficient information to either refute or substantiate the allegation," reclosed the investigation and maintained the finding of Not Sustained on the improper arrest of the complainant.

OIG's letter to COPA containing its recommendations is attached at Appendix A. COPA's response is attached at Appendix B.

Appendix A | OIG Letter



Deborah Witzburg | Inspector General
City of Chicago
Office of Inspector General
231 South LaSalle Street, 12th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604
Phone: (773) 478-7799

Via Electronic Mail

June 24, 2025

LAKENYA WHITE
INTERIM CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
CIVILIAN OFFICE OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY
1615 WEST CHICAGO AVENUE, 4TH FLOOR
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60622

Re: Log #2023-0005718

Dear Chief Administrator White:

Pursuant to § 2-56-230(c)(ii) of the Municipal Code of Chicago (MCC), the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) Public Safety section has conducted a preliminary review of the investigation conducted by the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) in Log #2023-0005718. OIG recommends that COPA reopen the investigation to consider only the pre-arrest facts when conducting the probable cause analysis for the misconduct allegation that CPD members arrested the complainant without justification. Log #2023-0005718 is currently in Command Channel Review.

Log #2023-0005718 concerns allegations that CPD Officers Bret Hon, Star #6214, Steven Sreniawski, Star #2878, and Michael Tanon, Star #6300, stopped, arrested, and conducted a strip search of the complainant without justification. COPA reached a finding of Not Sustained on the improper stop and arrest of the complainant, and unfounded the allegation that the accused CPD members conducted a strip search.¹ On December 5, 2023, the complainant was arrested and charged with a City of Chicago ordinance violation, soliciting unlawful business, and a Class B misdemeanor, manufacturing/delivery of cannabis. On January 23, 2024, the complainant's misdemeanor manufacturing/delivery of cannabis charge was dismissed, and on March 22, 2024, the complainant's City ordinance violation was non-suited.

According to the Arrest Report and Original Case Incident Report (OCIR) in COPA's investigative file, on December 5, 2023, Officers Hon, Sreniawski and Tanon were patrolling a "high narcotics location," when they observed the complainant, who was standing in front of a restaurant, "look in [officers'] direction and place [their] index finger/thumb [toward their] mouth in a smoking gesture directed [toward] pedestrian and vehicular traffic." In both reports, Officer Sreniawski wrote that officers "know this gesture to be the solicitation for unlawful sale of street level cannabis." Officer Sreniawski also noted that once the complainant saw the officers, the complainant began to walk in

¹ Attachment 36.

a “hurried manner,” away from them. The officers exited their patrol car and placed the complainant under arrest for soliciting unlawful business.²

According to Officer Sreniawski, after the arrest during a custodial search of the complainant while on scene, Officer Tanon recovered one sealed gold and clear bag containing suspected cannabis, and \$69 in currency “comprised of small bills consistent with narcotics proceeds.” The complainant did not have a picture ID on their person at the time of arrest.³ Subsequent to the arrest and custodial search, the officers charged the complainant with manufacturing/delivering cannabis.⁴

Video footage from the restaurant’s parking lot security camera, at the 5:10 mark, captures the complainant and several other individuals exit the front door of the restaurant and converse in the parking lot. At the 5:52 to 6:00 mark of the video footage, the complainant lifts their left hand, which appears to be wrapped around an object, up toward their mouth and exhales a large cloud of smoke. The video does not show any pedestrian or vehicular traffic passing through the area and the complainant is looking towards the ground while lifting their index finger and thumb towards their mouth. At the 6:01 mark, the complainant and the other individuals look in the same direction, the complainant begins walking toward the street, and a marked patrol enters the camera frame at the 6:03 mark. The complainant looks at the patrol car as it enters the restaurant parking lot, and they step to the side of it. At the 6:15 mark, the complainant lifts their hand up toward their face and another cloud of smoke appears as Officer Hon approaches them.⁵

On Officer Sreniawski’s body worn camera (BWC) footage at the 2:18 mark, Officer Hon approaches the complainant and begins placing them in custody with the help of Officer Sreniawski. Simultaneously, Officer Tanon states, “Wrong guys to fuck with. You’re going to solicit the car when we’re coming right by? How much work you got on you? How much work you got on you? Why are you soliciting my car? I’ve locked you up before, I know exactly who you are,” as Officer Sreniawski conducts a protective pat down.⁶ On Officer Hon’s BWC, at the 3:14 mark, Officer Tanon tells the complainant, “You’re a bad drug dealer,” the complainant replies, “I’m not no fucking bad...I don’t even sell drugs,” and Officer Tanon states, “You absolutely do sell drugs...I locked you up boy, what you talking about?”⁷ As officers walk the complainant to their patrol car, Officer Tanon states, “You’re going to solicit my car when I’m coming by, you picked the wrong time, boy.”⁸ At this point of the interaction, the officers had not found any narcotics or other contraband on the complainant. On Officer Tanon’s BWC, at the 4:43 mark, Officer Tanon requests a transport car via the police radio.⁹ On Officer Hon’s BWC at the 6:18 mark, Officer Hon asks Officer Tanon if they are going to call for a transport car, the complainant asks Officer Hon why the officers are transporting them, and Officer Hon responds, “You’re under arrest for soliciting, man.”¹⁰

² Attachments 4; 5.

³ Attachments 4; 20.

⁴ Attachments 4; 5.

⁵ Attachment 6.

⁶ Attachments 9; 5; According to the Criminal History Report located in the investigative file, the complainant, who was an 18-year-old at the time of the incident, had never been arrested by CPD nor convicted of any crime prior to the incident.

⁷ Attachment 11.

⁸ Attachment 10 at the 4:14 mark.

⁹ Attachment 10.

¹⁰ Attachment 11.

Officer Tanon's BWC at the 7:08 mark shows the transport officers arrive on scene, and then Officer Tanon conducts a custodial search of the complainant. At the 7:45 mark, Officer Tanon removes one gold and clear bag containing a small amount of suspected cannabis from the complainant's left pocket and a multi-colored vape from their right pocket, presumably what the complainant was smoking prior to their arrest.¹¹

In the Credibility Assessment within COPA's Final Summary Report (FSR), COPA wrote:

From available video footage, it was difficult to discern the underlying conduct that provided probable cause for [the complainant's] arrest. [The complainant's] behavior was equally consistent with [their] walking into the restaurant parking lot and smoking a cigarette (as [they] contended) as with [their] soliciting the sale of cannabis (as the officers contend). The relatively small amount of cannabis recovered from [the complainant's] person and the modest amount of money on [their] person at the time of arrest (\$69) do not suggest that [the complainant] was involved in the sale of cannabis. The arrest relied almost completely on the officers' subjective interpretation of [the complainant's] actions.

COPA concluded that the arrest of the complainant was "permissible" because Officer Tanon recovered cannabis from the complainant's left pocket and "Municipal Code of Chicago 7-24-099 states it shall be unlawful for any person to possess cannabis in any public place."¹² However, according to the Arrest Report and OCIR, the complainant was placed under arrest for solicitation due to the officer's belief that the complainant was attempting to sell cannabis by using a hand gesture. Significantly, the video evidence in the investigative file and the associated arrest reports show that CPD members had no knowledge of the cannabis until they conducted a custodial search only after the arrest. As the cannabis was found as a result of and only after the arrest pursuant to a custodial search, the recovered cannabis could not have been a basis for nor justification for the arrest as COPA concludes. In other words, COPA concluded that the arrest of the complainant was justified based on facts that the officers did not possess at the time of arrest nor would have possessed but for the search incident to that arrest.

COPA's misconduct analysis of the allegation that CPD members arrested the complainant without justification appears to improperly consider post-arrest circumstances to justify the arrest, and does not consider the video evidence which shows the complainant smoking prior to and as the officers approach. Additionally, COPA does not consider the facts stated in its credibility assessment that the amount of cannabis and currency found on the complainant does not suggest they were selling narcotics at the time of arrest.

Based on OIG's preliminary review, and without taking any position on any other aspect of the investigation or its findings, OIG recommends that COPA reopen Log #2023-0005718 to ensure its analysis of the probable cause for arrest of the complainant aligns with the circumstances known to the involved officers at the time of the complainant's arrest, and does not rely on evidence obtained as a result of that arrest.

Please contact Chief Investigative Analyst LaDonna Candia-Flanagan at

¹¹ Attachment 10.

¹² Attachment 36.

lcandia-flanagan@igchicago.org or (773) 478-5614 with any questions. Please send your response to this recommendation within the time allowed by MCC § 2-56-245. OIG will consider a failure to respond in the time permitted by ordinance to be a declination of our recommendation. OIG looks forward to COPA's response and recommends that COPA incorporate this letter and its response into the electronic case file to provide for a complete record.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tobara Richardson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tobara Richardson
Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety
Office of Inspector General

cc: Deborah Witzburg, Inspector General, OIG
Samuel Chae, Associate General Counsel for Public Safety, OIG
LaDonna Candia-Flanagan, Chief Investigative Analyst for Public Safety, OIG
Angela Snell, Assistant General Counsel, COPA
Timothy L. Moore, Deputy Director, Bureau of Internal Affairs, CPD

Appendix B | Department Response

RE: Recommendation to Reopen Log #2023-0005718 (In CCR)

From Angela Snell <Angela.Snell@chicagocopa.org>

Date Thu 6/26/2025 7:24 AM

To LaDonna Candia-Flanagan <lcandia-flanagan@igchicago.org>; Lakenya White <LAKENYA.WHITE@chicagocopa.org>

Cc Timothy Moore <Timothy.Moore@chicagopolice.org>; Tobar Richardson <trichardson@igchicago.org>; Deborah Witzburg <dwitzburg@igchicago.org>; Samuel Chae <schae@igchicago.org>

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Good morning, COPA will reopen this log. Please let me know of any questions.

Best,

Angie Snell (she/they)
Acting General Counsel
Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA)
1615 W. Chicago Ave.
Chicago, IL 60622
Office: 312-746-0186
Cell: 312-965-2025

From: LaDonna Candia-Flanagan <lcandia-flanagan@igchicago.org>

Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2025 9:10 PM

To: Lakenya White <LAKENYA.WHITE@chicagocopa.org>

Cc: Angela Snell <Angela.Snell@chicagocopa.org>; Timothy Moore <Timothy.Moore@chicagopolice.org>; Tobar Richardson <trichardson@igchicago.org>; Deborah Witzburg <dWitzburg@igchicago.org>; Samuel Chae <schae@igchicago.org>

Subject: Recommendation to Reopen Log #2023-0005718 (In CCR)

[Warning: External email]

Dear Chief Administrator White:

On behalf of Deputy Inspector General Tobar Richardson, please find attached to this email a recommendation to reopen Log #2023-0005718. Log #2023-0005718 is currently in command channel review. Please acknowledge your receipt of this correspondence and let me know if you have any questions.

LaDonna Candia-Flanagan

Chief Investigative Analyst-Public Safety

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LaDonna Candia-Flanagan
Chief Investigative Analyst for Public Safety

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For further information about this report, please contact the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, 231 S. LaSalle Street, 12th Floor, Chicago, IL 60604, or visit our website at igchicago.org.

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