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February 19, 2021

President Dominic Leone
Secretary Victor Plantinga
Commissioner Dana Cichy
Commissioner Greg Leahy
Commissioner Danielle Basil Long

Wauwatosa Police and Fire Commission
7725 W. North Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

*Sent Via Electronic Mail to c_policefire@wauwatosa.net
Cc: Mayor and Common Council via tclerk@wauwatosa.net*

RE: Hiring Process for the New Wauwatosa Police Chief

Dear President Leone and PFC Commissioners:

After serving 31 years as the Chief of the Wauwatosa Police Department ("WPD"), [Chief Barry Weber announced on February 1st his plan to retire later this year](#). Under Wisconsin law, Wauwatosa's Police and Fire Commission ("PFC") is charged with the hiring of the new chief and tasked with providing civilian oversight over the Police Department. A few days after Chief Weber's announcement, the PFC met to accept his retirement and [unanimously agreed to hire two outside consulting firms to run the hiring process for selecting a new chief](#). During this meeting, the Commissioners expressed their collective desire to ensure that the public was engaged during the hiring process.

As the PFC Commissioners know, the City of Wauwatosa is at an inflection point. Over the last year, the community has seen frequent demonstrations and protests calling for reforms to the WPD, including to its leadership and culture, and for the firing of Officer Joseph Mensah, who, while on duty, shot and killed three people over the last five years. It is clear that WPD must reset and repair its relationship with many community members, in particular with community members of color. The hiring process for the new chief is an opportunity to start this work.

During the February 17 PFC meeting, the Commissioners were presented with a five-step process to select a new chief. The only mention of public input was allowing community members to complete a survey indicating the core competencies they would like the new chief to possess. A mere survey alone does not provide meaningful public participation in the hiring process.

As a result, the ACLU of Wisconsin calls on the PFC to take steps to guarantee an open and inclusive process for the selection of the next chief of the WPD. In particular, the ACLU of Wisconsin believes that that PFC must conduct a national search for the new chief, engage community members in the process of interviewing candidates, publically announce the finalists for the position, and, as the City of Milwaukee does, hold public interviews of finalists in which community members can submit or ask questions.

Ultimately, it will be the new chief that will set the culture and priorities for the WPD moving forward. The community deserves a hiring process that is transparent and centers on those communities most harmed by police misconduct and over-policing. As such, extensive public input and engagement are critical to successfully selecting a new chief who will ensure fair policing in the city.

Sincerely,

Molly Collins
Advocacy Director
ACLU of Wisconsin

Cc: Mayor McBride and Members of the Wauwatosa Common Council