

WILL THE CITY IMPLEMENT THE MDHR CONSENT DECREE? DON'T COUNT ON IT!

Nearly a year after finding that the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Police Department engages in wholesale discrimination, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) finally negotiated a consent decree with the city. A consent decree is a court-enforceable agreement outlining the changes the city and MPD are required to make.

That should be the end of it, right? The city and the MPD will now start working to implement the required changes, right? WRONG!

Already, the city is looking for ways to dodge the changes that are clearly needed. For starters, the city declared in the consent decree that it doesn't agree with the MDHR findings. When you don't admit your past actions and their harm to the community, it's pretty unlikely that you'll willingly change that harmful conduct.

What are the other signs that the city will try to take shortcuts around implementing the consent decree?

- Even after the MDHR got an injunction to ban chokeholds in June 2020, MPD officers continued to use neck restraints in violation of the injunction, and without discipline.¹
- Although the injunction required officers to intervene in excessive force incidents, they rarely did.²
- In January 2023, Chief O'Hara hired Tyler Timberlake, formerly with the Fairfax, VA police department. While there, Timberlake repeatedly tased and brutalized a man who had committed no crimes and was having a mental health crisis. Just 10 days after George Floyd's murder, he knelt on the man's neck while beating him in the head. The man suffered fractures and other serious injuries. He successfully sued the city. Timberlake represents the kind of brutal, racist policing the consent decree is meant to end yet O'Hara refused to terminate him until the community forced him to do so, claiming he never saw the video of Timberlake's actions—a video readily available online.³
- Even after the fiasco with Tyler Timberlake, Chief O'Hara attempted to rehire former MPD officer Charlie Storlie. Storlie was the cop who shot fellow officer Duy Ngo then lied about it, causing Ngo to be disgraced and later commit suicide. It's hard to imagine a more unfit and inappropriate hire. Even Storlie himself couldn't believe he was offered the job.⁴
- The City put Amelia Huffman in charge of implementing the consent decree. They created a position in the City Attorney's office specifically for her: Policy Reform & Implementation Senior Advisor, with a salary range of \$152,886 to \$181,236. This is the same Amelia Huffman who has been steeped in the violent, racist culture of the MPD for decades. While acting chief, she lied about signing the no-knock warrant that resulted in the murder of Amir Locke, then repeatedly referred to him as a suspect in the media. She promoted four disgraced officers including two who had been previously fired for serious ethical breaches. **She is the absolute worst person to fix the problems with the MPD that she helped create.**⁵

- Chief O'Hara made clear his feelings about the consent decree when he wrote this to a community member, *"I know we will not make every deadline as laid out in the agreement, and that's okay. I have heard from our cops and I know they are not doing terrible things as some allege...they are not policing in a racist way and are not routinely violating people's civil rights."* Clearly, the MDHR and DOJ see it differently and have the data to prove it. That the chief thinks it's okay to miss deadlines is concerning. But the fact that he doesn't believe the MPD engages in racist conduct or violates people's civil rights, along with his questionable hires makes us doubt his commitment to making the necessary changes.
- During the Department of Justice press conference on June 16, where they announced the results of their investigation showing that the MPD engages in wholesale racism and violations of civil rights, Chief O'Hara made a point to talk about "the trauma our police officers have endured in the last three years." These are people paid at least \$100,000 a year to inflict harm on the community and we're supposed to worry about their "trauma"?
- The MDHR agreement requires meetings of the city's new Community Commission on Police Oversight to include a public comment period. Despite this, the Director of the Civil Rights Department, Alberder Gillespie, blocked the public comment period during their first two meetings and told community members she had no intention of following the agreement until she is forced to do so. Just so we're clear—this is the head of the Civil Rights Department and she resisted implementing the consent decree!

We have gotten to this point because of decades of failed leadership in the City and the Minneapolis Police Department. Now that outside agencies are laying down the law, we're already seeing evidence that the city intends to skirt the changes that are desperately needed. **DON'T LET THEM.**

- Attend all hearings on the MDHR consent decree and the required policy changes Make your voice heard.
- The court will appoint a monitor for the agreement, who will hold hearings with the community to check the city's progress. Participate in those hearings.

Keep an eye on our website and social media for the latest on the MDHR consent decree and the DOJ consent decree that will follow.

¹ DOJ Investigation, p. 14. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1587661/download>

² Ibid, p. 27.

³ <https://minnesotareformer.com/2023/05/04/mpd-chief-signed-off-on-hiring-virginia-officer-who-struck-used-stun-gun-on-unarmed-black-man/>

⁴ <https://kstp.com/5-investigates/minneapolis-police-tried-to-hire-another-former-officer-with-a-controversial-past-even-he-was-surprised/>

⁵ https://assets.nationbuilder.com/cuapb/pages/1/attachments/original/1687407287/Hell_No_to_Huffman_flyer.pdf?1687407287