

I. LETTER FROM THE MONITOR

Dear Cleveland Community,

The Eighteenth Semiannual Report covers the most recent reporting period, which spans from July 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025. The Semiannual Report is a requirement placed on the Monitor in paragraph 375 of the Consent Decree. That paragraph delineates the requirements of the report, and this report will follow those requirements. The Semiannual Report is filed with the Court and is a written public document. Overall, to adhere to the Consent Decree, the report must describe the work of the Monitor during the reporting period, achievements by the City on training and policy, remaining work necessary for compliance, and a projection of the work and challenges anticipated for the next reporting period.¹ Additionally, the paragraph requires that an explanation or a methodology used for assessing compliance be shared. Each of those requirements are followed in this report by section. In several cases, the report links to a more fulsome Monitoring Team report with further findings and complete methodologies.

This most recent reporting period can be described best with two words: **Changes** and **Assessments**. First, the changes. In August of 2025 when the Court learned of the then-Monitor's plan to withdraw, the Court appointed a new Monitor, who in turn selected and named a Deputy Monitor. The transition to a new team began in earnest. The former and current Monitors worked together with the City and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to ensure a smooth transition. On September 30, 2025, the Parties -- the City and DOJ -- agreed jointly to a six-month term with former Ohio Supreme Court Justice Melody Stewart as Deputy Monitor and me as Monitor. We added a few members to our team and retained the very experienced and committed subject matter experts, all of whom have been engaged in the Consent Decree in Cleveland now for several years.

Over the course of the reporting period, our changes are evidenced in the focus and the style of our work, and with hope, the results of our work. Our work is concentrated on the City and the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP) achieving compliance and steering efforts of working groups with stakeholders from the CDP, the Community Policing Commission (CPC), the Office of Professional Standards (OPS), the Community Police Review Board (CPRB), and the Police Accountability Team (PAT) toward that same goal. All these players have been doing good and important work for the residents of Cleveland. Our change in strategy is to ensure the focus, documentation, and individual and group efforts are supporting compliance specifically.

¹ At the time of this writing, there is pending before the Court a joint motion filed by the Parties to terminate the Consent Decree. Because that motion has not yet been ruled on by the Court and the Court has instructed the Monitoring Team and the Parties to proceed with all activities toward compliance, this letter and referenced 2026 plans are written with that instruction in mind.

As part of the transition process, the Monitor with members of the Team appeared before the City Council Safety Subcommittee on September 30, 2025. This was an important opportunity for exchange, discussion, and a deeper exploration of the content of the Seventeenth Semiannual Report. The Team looks forward to future presentations and discussion with that committee.

Continuing the work begun under the leadership of the former Monitor, we initiated or completed seven assessments in this reporting period. The second descriptor of the period – Assessments – form the basis for the Monitor, and as such the Court, to evaluate compliance. Much of the remaining time of the Consent Decree in Cleveland will be focused on assessments. It takes time to achieve change and readiness for assessments. Cleveland is now at that point. What every assessment reveals is the work accomplished and spells out specifically what remains to be done.

Assessments are a comprehensive and detailed review of every paragraph in a section or major subsection of the Consent Decree. The exhaustive reviews encompass a range of activities including review of policy language and the adherence in practice to those policies, observations of training sessions to ensure quality and consistency with Consent Decree requirements, and review of data including quantitative data points, officers' wearable camera system images, and countless reports. More details of those assessments are found in this Semiannual Report. In short, the arduous process for both the City and the Monitoring Team of preparing for, conducting, and then writing about each assessment resulted in several significant upgrades to paragraphs and in two sections, Crisis Intervention and Staffing, findings of Substantial and Effective Compliance.

While the compliance rating is important, equally important is the demonstration of critical culture change derived from the change in practice. Adherence to new policies and procedures must be observed across cases and across a significant period. For example, the Monitoring Team found that through the Crisis Intervention work with the Mental Health Response Advisory Committee (MHRAC) operating as a facilitator among the CDP, community stakeholders, and mental health providers with the Crisis Intervention Coordinator, the CDP has established “a robust crisis intervention program that meets or exceeds the foundational requirements....” The review of over 100 cases reveals that the dynamics of response have changed greatly since the new policies and training materials were created in 2016. Yet policy and operational changes that create a new culture must be evidenced across a range of topics and is not limited to Crisis Intervention.

Of the seven assessments started, the Monitoring Team completed and filed six with the Court by the end of the reporting period. The seventh assessment was filed with the Court on February 4, 2026. The Monitoring Team had countless meetings with government stakeholder groups by Consent Decree topics – meetings with the Training Section, the Law Department and the PAT, MHRAC and Crisis Intervention Coordinators, CDP Chief Todd on use of force reviews and findings from the search and seizure reviews, OPS, CPC, CPRB, the Force Review Board, and the Data Team at CDP – to stay abreast of current work. We hosted or attended meetings with clergy, police officers, community groups, the District Police Commissions, the Community Relations Board, and the CPC.

Continued work on assessments, working directly with stakeholders in the CDP, OPS, CPRB, and CPC toward compliance, categorizes the efforts moving forward. The focus for 2026 is on the civilian oversight apparatus, accountability, and discipline. The Monitoring Team has shared an ambitious plan for assessments for the 2026 calendar year that, with sufficient resources, will enable the Monitoring Team to assess every remaining section of the Consent Decree. We look forward to greater and more regular engagement with members of the CDP to share with them directly the successes we observe. We will continue to share updates with the Safety Subcommittee and regularly through the engagement of our local team, with members of the Cleveland community.

As completion of the Consent Decree appears closer, the Monitoring Team will focus on supporting the maturation of the very important civilian oversight functions built into the Consent Decree and the Charter. With a CPC, now operating with a permanent director, a Public Safety Inspector General, and OPS and CPRB working in tandem, the members of the CDP and the public can be more confident they are being served. The CDP members and the public deserve expeditious, fair fact finding in the adjudication of cases. The foundations are established; maturation, achieved over time, and through resources and support, is necessary for these systems to achieve the necessary level of confidence from all.

CDP members, both officers and supervisors, are demonstrating adherence to use of force policies and when there is a policy violation in use of force cases, the chain of command identifies the issues and deals with them appropriately. In the review of the search and seizure paragraphs, when the Monitoring Team reviewed the wearable camera system and the written reports of members together, only then could we with confidence report that the stops were conducted in compliance with policy because often the written explanation on its own was insufficient. The Monitoring Team sees the need for increased training in and supervisory review of the written articulation for stops and searches. This is an important gap that must be addressed and still, the Monitoring Team sees the work of officers as greatly changed. Notwithstanding the Division's ability to identify and correct problems with use of force, adherence to consistent and reasonable discipline in other areas remains an area of concern.

In the coming year, the Monitoring Team looks forward to working cooperatively with City stakeholders to prepare for and conduct additional assessments with a focus on civilian oversight and all aspects of accountability – areas that are today still in need of work. Our shared goal is to reach substantial and effective compliance across the Consent Decree in an expeditious manner.

Best regards,

CMCole

Christine M. Cole
Monitor