

Community Oversight Board Executive Summary

June 14, 2026 Greenwood Avenue Incident

Background

The Battle Creek Community Oversight Board (COB) reviews certain police-community complaints when requested under City Ordinance Chapter 286.

At the request of the City Manager, the Board reviewed a June 14, 2026 encounter involving multiple Battle Creek police officers and a minor on Greenwood Avenue. The Board considered information from the Battle Creek Police Department's Office of Professional Standards review, body-worn camera footage, police department policies and procedures, court decisions related to investigative stops, and public feedback received through meetings and community forums.

The following executive summary is presented as approved by the Community Oversight Board.

Executive Summary

As set forth in Battle Creek City Ordinance Ch286 ("Ch286"), the COB's purpose is to advise the City Manager during reconsideration of the Police Chief's determination after a Community Relations Complaint (CRC) investigation filed under the BCPD process. The Battle Creek City Manager requested that the COB review an encounter between multiple officers and a minor on Greenwood Avenue on June 14, 2026. Our conclusions and recommendations are based on the following sources: the BCPD Office of Professional Standards review, select court rulings related to the case of *Terry v. Ohio*, our independent review of body camera and BCPD policies and procedures, and public feedback as expressed in the COB open meeting, as well as community forums.

Conclusions

1. The COB believes a number of aspects of the primary officer's behavior during the encounter are inconsistent with BCPD written policies and procedures, specifically: PR 302.3.1, PR 420.2.5, PR 420.3.1 and PR 401.1.1. These policies/procedures are related to department expectations of professional conduct and ending a field investigation as soon as the basis for the original detainment (in this case, concern about carrying a weapon) disappeared. Additionally, the COB believes that statements made by the officer reveal bias towards the Washington Heights community.

2. The Board believes that lawyers could argue in court about whether the conditions for a Terry stop were met - the 'articulated facts' are thin. Legal arguments, however, will not address the relations between the community and police. Nor will it make policing more effective at promoting public safety - which is something that everyone in Battle Creek deserves. This community needs to feel like they are respected as human beings and not judged based on where they live. Moreover, we affirm that the community has raised legitimate concerns both with the initial justification for the stop and the nature of the interaction during the stop. It is the job of our public servants to address public concerns and not hide behind legal arguments about whether the facts articulated are sufficient to justify a stop when people in the community clearly do not believe they did. We note that whether the actions and demeanor of the minor add up to a reasonable suspicion are a matter of interpretation. The officer stated it was 'his experience' that they did. Community members articulated an alternative understanding of the minor's actions.

Recommendation

We recommend that corrective actions go beyond training for these two officers on professionalism. BCPD needs to engage the community with the aim of coming to an understanding of why people are upset about this encounter. Then, policies and practices should be put in place to ensure there are opportunities for officers to learn about the community they are patrolling. Such understanding and knowledge would reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding and counteract bias.

Because of the damage done to community relations and the potential bias shown by the officers, we recommend that the officers be removed from rotation in the Washington Heights area (not removed from duty in any way) until the opportunity has been given for further training and community-building. We would recommend that, when it is time to re-integrate the officers to the area, they be partnered for additional training with officers that are experienced and have a relationship with the Washington Heights community, possibly one of the COPS officers.

Accessibility note: The sections titled “Executive Summary,” “Conclusions,” and “Recommendation” are reproduced as provided by the Community Oversight Board. The “Background” section was added to provide context and improve document accessibility.