

Commission on Sensitive Crimes

Motion to Approve Letter to Dane County Executive and Dane County Board of Supervisors to Amend the COSC Enabling Ordinance 15.23

Be it so moved that the Commission on Sensitive Crimes approves the COSC chair to send the letter drafted below on behalf of the COSC to the Dane County Executive and members of the Dane County Board of Supervisors.

Dear County Executive Parisi and Members of the Dane County Board of Supervisors:

The Dane County Commission on Sensitive Crimes (COSC) is a public commission created under Dane County Ordinance 15.23. The Ordinance charges the COSC with serving as a forum to discuss and coordinate county stakeholders' responses to sensitive crimes, assisting Dane County with developing policies relating to the County's approach to sensitive crimes, and providing analysis of public policies regarding sensitive crimes.

During the past year, COSC members have expressed a strong preference for prioritizing discussions and initiatives that would increase the representation of members of traditionally underserved communities on the COSC and to improve the COSC's and other relevant county stakeholders' knowledge about and responsiveness to issues that disproportionately affect victims of sensitive crimes from such communities.

One of the first obstacles identified by COSC members to achieving the goals of a more diverse and inclusive COSC membership was the COSC enabling ordinance. COSC members engaged in lengthy discussions over a period of several meetings about how the enabling ordinance could be changed in order to foster a more inclusive and diverse COSC membership, which will also hopefully benefit the COSC's other ongoing efforts to better respond to issues affecting victims from traditionally marginalized communities.

COSC members identified four changes to the enabling ordinance that they respectfully request the County Executive and County Board make to Ordinance 15.23 to help achieve the above-stated goals. The four requested changes and rationales for each change are:

1. Limit voting members to serving 3 consecutive terms. The current Ordinance has different lengths of terms for different members, which does not need to be changed.
 - Rationale: The current lack of term limits for voting members doesn't encourage adequate membership turnover, which in turn tends to favor already established leaders on sensitive crimes issues, who overwhelmingly do not represent traditionally marginalized communities. In addition, term limits will require COSC members to engage in more thoughtful outreach to future voting members in a manner that will hopefully ensure better diversity and inclusion in the membership. Finally, other units

of local government (such as Minneapolis) have identified term limits on public commissions as a potential way to improve diversity on public bodies.

2. Add one additional undesigned “citizen” voting member to the COSC. Currently the COSC has two voting seats reserved for citizen members that do not have to represent a particular organization.
 - Rationale: Most of the voting membership seats on the COSC are reserved for institutional stakeholders that work on preventing sensitive crimes, responding to sensitive crimes, and/or providing services to victims of sensitive crimes. These organizations often lack staff diversity that accurately reflects the demographic makeup of Dane County. Including another undesigned citizen member will increase opportunities to reach out to potential stakeholders who may not be adequately represented by the current COSC membership composition.
3. Include an additional voting seat for a representative from a Dane County organization engaged in anti-racism advocacy, community outreach, or education.
 - Rationale: Specifically including an organization that engages in community anti-racism work will be an effective way to ensure broader community representation on the COSC and better inform COSC discussions regarding the impact of sensitive crimes on traditionally marginalized communities.
4. Include language encouraging the County Executive to give due consideration to ensuring a membership that has some level of geographic diversity that is reflective of Dane County as a whole. Such language could be modeled on existing Ordinance 15.23(6), which requires “... the County Executive to give due consideration to a membership which reflects the gender, racial, sexual orientation, and ethnic characteristics of the Dane County community.”
 - Rationale: COSC members frequently mentioned that Commission membership is heavily weighted toward individuals or organizations based in Madison and believe that there should be some language to try and urge more diverse geographic representation to try and ensure that issues affecting victims in other Dane County communities are adequately discussed and addressed by the COSC.

The COSC approved these recommendations by a vote of xx-xx at its April 25, 2017 meeting. As chair of the COSC, I would be happy further discuss these recommendations should you have any comments, questions, or concerns. I will also follow up with County Executive office staff and County Board staff to discuss how best to implement these changes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mike Murray
Chair, Dane County Commission on Sensitive Crimes