



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Recommendation 20261006-005: Recognition of Recent APD Shooting & Supporting Measures to Provide Public Accountability

WHEREAS, on July 24, 2026, 17-year-old Anthoneil Williams II was fatally shot by Austin Police Department (APD) officers at a neighborhood park near Baden Lane and Dessau Road; and

WHEREAS, subsequent official reviews and Austin Police Department disclosures revealed that Anthoneil Williams II was unarmed and the object in his waistband was a water bottle at the time officers discharged their weapons; and

WHEREAS, while the shooting remained under active investigation, Austin Police Chief Lisa Davis publicly stated that “all points” indicated the incident was a “suicide by police,” assigning a possible motive to Anthoneil Williams II before the completion of independent and thorough investigations; and

WHEREAS, the National Police Accountability Project (NPAP), a national organization dedicated to police accountability and civil rights, specifically criticized APD's rapid characterization of Anthoneil Williams II's death as “suicide by cop,” raising concerns that assigning such a label before a meaningful investigation shifts attention away from questions of de-escalation, use of force, and governmental accountability; and

WHEREAS, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), a national organization of police executives and law-enforcement professionals, recognizes that encounters involving individuals believed to be seeking a lethal police response should prompt specialized crisis intervention emphasizing time, distance, communication, patience, and de-escalation, and has documented that many such encounters can be resolved without the use of lethal force; and

WHEREAS, terminology such as “suicide by cop” or “suicide by police,” particularly when used before an investigation has established a person's intent, risks shifting responsibility for a police-involved death onto the deceased, making that individual the perceived causal actor in their own death while prematurely shaping public understanding of the government's use of deadly force; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin should use neutral, fact-based language when communicating about police-involved deaths and should distinguish between evidence concerning a person's possible

mental or behavioral health crisis and the separate question of whether officers' actions, tactics, de-escalation efforts, and use of force were appropriate; and

WHEREAS, repeated patterns of officer misconduct, insufficient de-escalation, and unjustified use of force have historically inflicted severe trauma and deadly harm across Austin communities; and

WHEREAS, civilian oversight bodies, including the Community Police Review Commission, require unfettered access to all body-worn camera footage, dispatch recordings, internal affairs files, and investigative materials to ensure true transparency, accountability, and the protection of civil rights; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin owes an enduring debt of remembrance, solemnity, and public reckoning to all individuals whose lives have been cut short by police violence;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION that:

1. Austin City Council is urged to condemn instances of police misconduct, excessive force, and reckless tactical failures by Austin Police Department officers that have resulted in deadly harm to community members and to reaffirm the City's commitment to meaningful accountability and the preservation of human life;
2. City Council urged to call upon the Chief of Police to issue a formal public apology to the family of Anthoneil Williams II for prematurely characterizing his death as "suicide by cop" or "suicide by police" while investigations into the incident remained ongoing.
3. The Austin City Council is urged to call upon the City Manager to direct the Austin Police Department and other City departments to discontinue the use of "suicide by cop," "suicide by police," and similar terminology as a premature or conclusory public characterization of police-involved deaths, particularly while an incident remains under investigation. City and police communications should instead use neutral, fact-based language describing observable circumstances and should not attribute suicidal intent to a deceased individual unless supported by a completed and appropriately reviewed investigation.
4. APD officers, emergency communications personnel, behavioral health professionals, or other first responders are called upon to recognize indicators that a person may be experiencing a suicidal or behavioral health crisis for the purpose of providing an appropriate non-lethal crisis response. Consistent with guidance from the Police Executive Research Forum, suspected suicidal intent should prompt heightened consideration of communication, time, distance, de-escalation, crisis intervention, and other life-preserving tactics whenever circumstances reasonably permit.

5. City Council should fully affirm and support the Community Police Review Commission's actions to secure every piece of evidence, unredacted record, and investigative file relevant to the shooting of Anthonel Williams II, affirming that unimpeded civilian oversight is essential to ensuring dignity and constitutional protection for all Austinites.
6. Austin City Council should urge the City Manager to develop a formal proposal—in consultation with impacted families, community advocates, and historic public records—to establish a permanent municipal memorial honoring all victims of police violence in the City of Austin since the year 2000.

Date of Approval: 10/6/2026

Motioned By: Commissioner Miller

Seconded By: Commissioner Goss Weisberg

Vote: 11-0

For: Chair Anderson, Vice Chair Parsons, Commissioners Davis, Eugene, Goss Weisberg, Harden, Hayes, Horton, Linder, Miller, and Smith

Against: None

Absent: Commissioners Dozier, Jackson, Ross and Rudd

Attest: Nekaybaw Watson, Staff Liaison

Nekaybaw Watson