

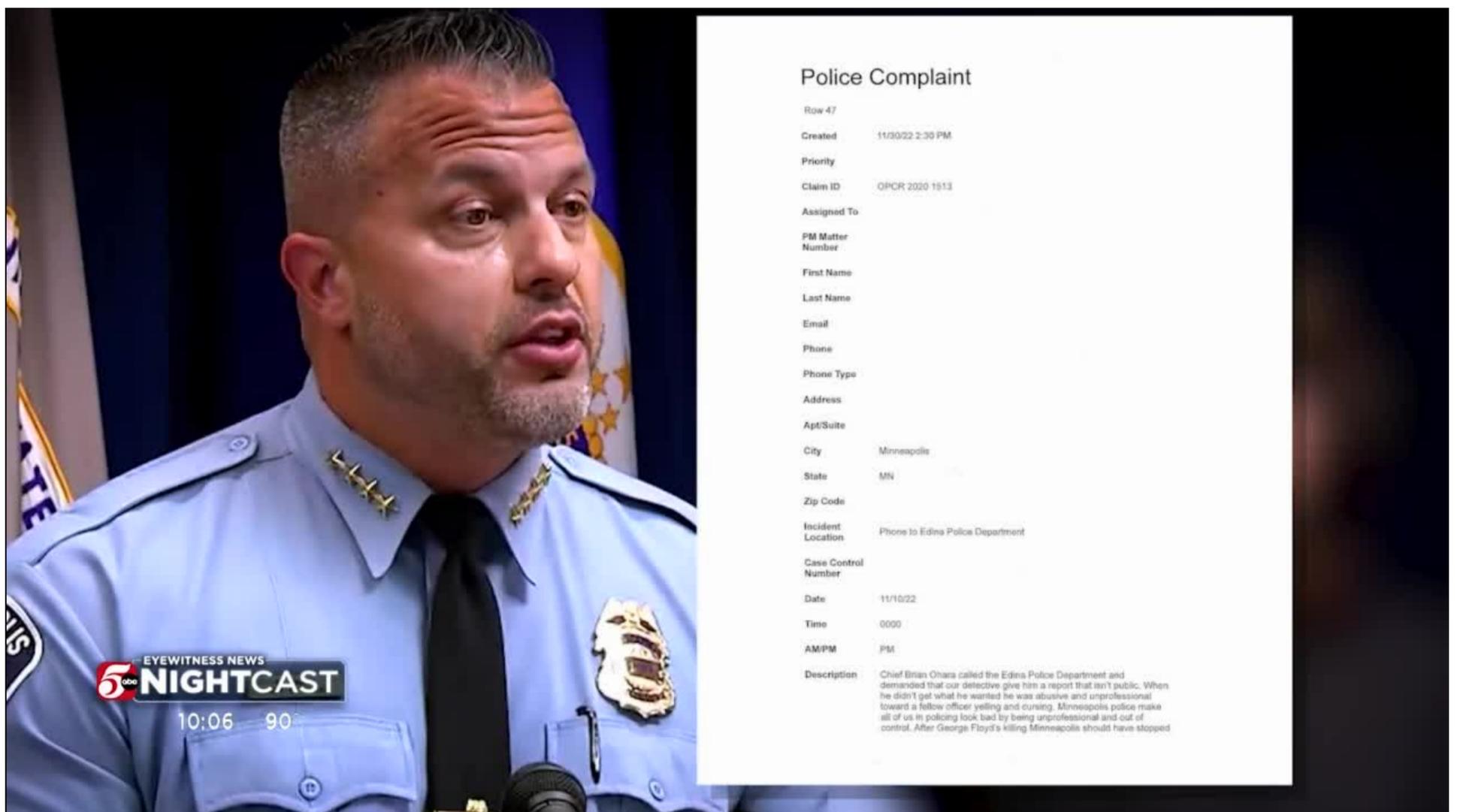
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Outside law firm hired to investigate 3 separate complaints against MPD chief

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Outside law firm hired to investigate 3 separate complaints against MPD chief

An outside law firm has been hired by the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office to investigate three separate complaints filed against Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara, sources tell 5 EYEWITNESS NEWS.

All three complaints were filed with the Office of Police Conduct Review, a neutral agency under the umbrella of the city's Office of Civil Rights.

5 EYEWITNESS NEWS obtained those three complaints, which are considered open investigations. None of the accusations against Chief O'Hara has been substantiated.

The first complaint was filed on Nov. 30, only 23 days after O'Hara was sworn in as chief. The complaint stated, "Chief O'Hara called the Edina Police Department and demanded that our detective give him a report that isn't public. When he [Chief O'Hara] didn't get what he wanted he was abusive and unprofessional toward a fellow officer yelling and cursing."

Pat Nelson is the chair of the Criminal Justice Department at Minnesota State University-Mankato. She worked for 17 years as an officer at MPD and retired with the rank of sergeant. Nelson said the first complaint, if substantiated, would be actions that violated MPD policy.

"That's violating the code of conduct that we have for peace officers, and professionalism is actually one of our pillars of procedural justice," Nelson said. "So if you are trying to build trust in the community, trust among your officers and trust among other agencies, you need to stay professional."

The second complaint against Chief O'Hara was filed in February. It stated the date of the incident in question was Jan. 27. The complainant stated, "Officers responded to a help call. Chief of police used reportable force, but did not do a force report." The type of force used is not detailed in the complaint.

Nelson said if the second complaint is substantiated, it would be a serious issue because the city just entered into a settlement agreement with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and a consent decree with the U.S. Justice Department.

"The use of force is actually one of the foundational issues in the consent decree that the city of Minneapolis is under right now and it's been a community concern for years, for decades in fact," said Nelson. "If he decides to not report reportable force, then why should anyone else follow that policy? He needs to be the example there."

The third complaint stated, "Chief O'Hara was untruthful when providing a statement to the Minnesota Reformer regarding the hiring of Officer Tyler Timberlake. After the Reformer inquired about Timberlake's hiring, Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara released a statement saying he was extremely concerned to learn about the hiring and directed staff to complete a thorough investigation. A follow up article by the Minnesota Reformer clearly states Chief personally signed off on the hiring of Tyler Timberlake."

Bodycam video shows Timberlake [using force to arrest a suspect](#) while working as an officer in Fairfax County, Virginia, in 2020, days after George Floyd's murder. Timberlake was eventually charged with misdemeanor assault, but a jury acquitted him in 2022.

Timberlake was hired by MPD in January, and in July O'Hara [defended his actions](#). Timberlake's last day with MPD was July 5.

Nelson said if the complaint about untruthfulness is sustained it could have far-reaching implications.

"This undermines your trust-building in the community and also undermines morale in the agency because how could somebody who works for him trust anything that he says? And then also why would the community also trust that?" Nelson said. "In fact, this is what you kind of want to avoid in your first year as you're establishing trust, not only in the community but in your agency."

5 EYEWITNESS NEWS asked Chief O'Hara multiple times over two days for an interview or comment but has not received a response.

Minneapolis Police Department sent 5 EYEWITNESS NEWS the following statement on Thursday:

"The Chief was not aware of any specifics regarding open complaints against him until a recent media inquiry. He looks forward to fully cooperating with the outside investigation and feels confident that the investigation will resolve this matter and allow the department and city to move forward with the important that needs to be done."

— *Public Information Office, MPD*

We also asked Mayor Jacob Frey for an interview or comment about the complaints but a spokesperson said the mayor cannot comment on personnel matters under state privacy law.

As of Monday, none of the accusations in the complaints has been substantiated.

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