



POLICE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION OF BUCKS COUNTY

P. O. Box 1717, Doylestown, PA 18901

Serving the Bucks County Law Enforcement Community Since 1952

April 8, 2026

Mr. Peter Nelson
Grim, Biehn & Thatcher
104 S 6th St,
Box 215
Perkasie, PA 18944
pnelson@grimlaw.com

Dear Mr. Nelson,

On March 19, 2026, you made a formal request to the Police Chiefs Association of Bucks County requesting a panel to conduct an independent review of the protest and arrest incident that occurred on February 20, 2026, within Quakertown Borough. This request was made so the Borough could have an independent administrative review of the overall incident, while also reflecting the Borough's commitment to transparency, accountability, and the continuous improvement of its law enforcement practices, with particular focus on the following areas:

1. Overall Planning, Preparation, and Staffing
2. Tactics
3. De-escalation and Tactics
4. Use of Force
5. Scene Safety and Management
6. Communications to the Public at Scene and Post-Incident
7. Detainee Care and Treatment
8. Supervision and Span of Control
9. Overall Policy Review
10. Overall Performance

The panel consisted of four Bucks County Police Chiefs who were selected to prepare a detailed report of their findings. Buckingham Township Police Chief David Scirrotto, Bensalem Police Director of Public Safety William McVey, Morrisville Borough Police Chief Richard Ciampa, and Upper Southampton Police Chief Dominic Varacallo were selected for the panel. Collectively, the panel members bring more than 100 years of combined law enforcement experience to this review. Their extensive backgrounds encompass a broad range of policing disciplines, leadership roles, and operational expertise.

Exhibit 1, attached hereto, provides an addendum to this review.

Exhibit 2, enclosed herewith, consists of screenshots derived from video recordings identified as relevant to the sequence of events that occurred on February 20, 2026. These materials are provided to assist the panel in its review and analysis of the incident.

Exhibit 3, attached hereto, provides a brief biographical summary of each panel member, outlining their qualifications and professional experience.

On February 20, 2026, members of the Quakertown Borough Police Department were responsible for the safety and security of a student led protest through Quakertown Borough. The protest was an anti-ICE march with approximately 40 students engaged in the march. Due to safety concerns, this event was not sanctioned by the school district. Quakertown Borough Police Department personnel took measures not to escalate the protesters, such as monitoring the march from a distance, not having uniformed personnel directly involved, and giving the protesters ample warnings about what behaviors would not be tolerated.

Despite these measures, the protest became unruly, unlawful, and placed lives at risk. Protesters overtook the street, cursed at passing vehicles, punched and kicked at least one vehicle, and threw an ice ball at another vehicle. Quakertown Borough Police Department personnel provided at least two separate warnings to the protesters to stay out of the street and to not engage in unlawful conduct. On the third interaction with the protesters, Quakertown Borough Police Department personnel attempted to arrest one of the protesters. This attempt was met with resistance, as the female protester pulled away from the officer and moved behind the crowd. Members of the crowd subsequently surrounded her in an apparent effort to shield her from further police contact. The officer, Lt. Mallery, pointed the offender out to assisting Quakertown Borough Police Department personnel as they arrived, one of them being Chief McElree.

Chief McElree arrived on scene in his unmarked police vehicle with his emergency lights activated and was in plain clothes that day. Upon seeing Lt. Mallery motion to the offender he wanted detained, Chief McElree moved into the crowd and attempted to grab the offender to assist with her arrest. It is at this point that the chaos and violent attack on Chief McElree began. Over the next few minutes, Chief McElree sustained multiple punches to the head by various offenders. He was punched in the front of the head multiple times by a male offender with a cell phone being used as an impact weapon. Other offenders punched him in the area of his head and body with their fists multiple times and continued to do so even when he fell to the ground. The assault on Chief McElree was a violent, somewhat coordinated attack by multiple offenders. Although a higher level of force was justified to be used by Chief McElree or other members of law enforcement in response to such aggression and resistance, no such force was used. Force such as chemical agents, taser, or impact weapons would have been justified, however they were not deployed. The members of the Quakertown Borough Police Department handled themselves with restraint and professionalism during a time of chaos. Chief McElree's actions and those of his Department, were justified and within police policy.

The single image that drew media attention showing Chief McElree on the ground with his arm around a female suspect's upper torso/neck, appears to have been captured from a clip lasting less than two seconds. It captured a moment immediately after he had fallen to the ground, while restraining a resisting subject and did not rise to the level of an attempted chokehold.

Chief McElree was attempting to arrest a non-compliant, actively resisting offender after having been violently assaulted for several minutes. The entirety of the digital videos captured that day clearly demonstrates the overwhelming violence of the assault Chief McElree endured at the hands of the offenders. Regardless of the fact that Chief McElree is a sworn police officer, the actions of these juvenile offenders and the aggressive assault on the Chief, were in no way warranted or justified. Those videos, combined with the extensive injuries Chief McElree endured, including three fractured ribs, a pneumothorax (collapsed lung) lacerated ear and possible concussion, are clear evidence that Chief McElree was the victim that day.

The following sections will address the specific areas of concern that were requested to be reviewed by Quakertown Borough:

1. Overall Planning, Preparation, and Staffing

In anticipation of a planned student protest on February 20, 2026, Quakertown High School and the Quakertown Borough Police Department engaged in comprehensive planning, preparation, and staffing coordination to ensure the safety of all participants and the general public.

Planning efforts focused on developing a structured and scalable response to a large student gathering and march through Quakertown Borough. Key considerations included maintaining public safety, minimizing disruption to traffic, addressing the potential presence of counter-protestors, and protecting public and private property.

Coordination between school administration and law enforcement was established through multiple meetings. School Resource Officers (SROs) played a central role in these efforts, serving as liaisons between students, protest organizers, school officials, and police supervisors. SROs also maintained ongoing communication with protest organizers to better understand the scope, intent, and anticipated participation in the event.

Staffing plans were developed to ensure adequate personnel coverage for all aspects of the operation. This included assigning officers to designated posts, determining appropriate uniform visibility to balance approachability and authority, and identifying staging locations for rapid deployment if conditions escalated. Traffic control measures were pre-identified to accommodate the planned march route and reduce disruption to the surrounding community.

Operational readiness remained flexible to adapt to changing circumstances. Upon receiving information regarding a potential counter response threat through a Safe2Say tip, law enforcement and school officials reassessed the operational plan and elevated safety considerations. As a result, school administration made the decision to cancel the protest due to concerns related to the threat. Despite the cancellation, Quakertown Borough Police Department maintained its operational preparedness.

Overall, the planning, preparation, and personnel staffing efforts reflected a coordinated, proactive, and adaptable approach to managing a potentially high-risk public event.

2. Tactics

The decision to police the demonstration from a distance was appropriate and consistent with accepted law enforcement practices for managing planned protests, particularly those involving students exercising their First Amendment rights.

A reduced or “low-profile” police presence aligns with best practices emphasizing facilitation over control. Law enforcement guidance indicates that officers should adopt a measured and proportionate response, avoiding actions that may unnecessarily escalate tensions or be perceived as intimidating. By maintaining distance, officers are better positioned to monitor crowd behavior, assess risk, and respond only when necessary, rather than contributing to potential conflict through an overly visible or militarized posture.

This approach also supports the principle that law enforcement’s primary role during demonstrations is to protect individuals’ rights to peacefully assemble while ensuring public safety.

Maintaining a restrained presence helps reinforce perceptions of fairness and legitimacy, which in turn promotes cooperation and reduces the likelihood of disorder.

The decision was particularly appropriate given that the protest was directed at a law enforcement-related entity, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Demonstrations involving grievances against law enforcement agencies can carry an increased risk of tension or escalation. In such contexts, a heavy or highly visible police presence may be interpreted as confrontational and could inadvertently heighten emotions among participants.

By policing from a distance, officers were able to strike a balance between readiness and restraint remaining available to intervene if public safety concerns arose, while minimizing the potential for intimidation.

3. De-escalation and Tactics

De-escalation tactics were employed at multiple points during the event.

Chief McElree attempted to verbally advise protestors to use the sidewalks. He interacted with the group while stopped at a traffic light and remained in his vehicle, which occurred at 4th Street and Broad Street. According to the report, he identified himself as a police officer and requested they stay out of the street and use the sidewalks for their safety. The Chief was met with opposition and defiance.

Lt. Mallery made several attempts to de-escalate throughout the incident. He closely monitored the group's movement and verbally addressed protestors when they left the sidewalks and walked into the roadway.

Lt. Mallery directed marked patrol units to clear an area when the protest deviated from its planned route and began moving toward the officers' staging location. This was done to avoid creating an overbearing police presence.

After protestors repeatedly entered the roadway, intentionally interfering with vehicular traffic, and attempted to damage property, Lt. Mallery and Sgt. Grill approached the group to instruct them to remain on the sidewalk and cease unlawful conduct. Lt. Mallery also instructed the students to protest peacefully and respectfully. The officers were met with obscenities and defiance and they subsequently returned to their mobile positions.

Shortly thereafter, two female protestors continued to protest in the street, with one standing as far as the double yellow center lines. Lt. Mallery again addressed the individual from his vehicle and instructed her to remain off the roadway. The individual argued that she was not in the street, despite being visibly in the roadway.

At approximately 1152 hours, Lt. Mallery determined that offender was to be detained because she was escalating the crowd's behavior, while encouraging others to remain in the street. Lt. Mallery took hold of the offender's left wrist and advised her she was not free to leave.

The offender immediately resisted, pulled away, and retreated further into the crowd. Rather than pursue her, Lt. Mallery withdrew and waited for additional patrol units.

During the arrest process and immediately following those actions, multiple officers communicated with the offenders as to why they were being arrested and the process they would undergo.

Additionally, SRO Lee employed effective de-escalation tactics following the altercation between students and officers. He used a calm and professional tone to help disperse the crowd and relied on his established professional relationships with students to gain their respect and compliance.

4. Use of Force

All force used was objectively reasonable and, in each instance, proportionate to or minimal to the level of resistance encountered by officers. Officers used only the minimal force necessary to overcome resistance and aggression. No chemical agents, taser, or impact weapons were deployed.

Several minor injuries were sustained by at least three of the arrestees. It should be noted that the use of force to overcome resistance has the potential to result in injury and can, at times, become violent. However, under *Graham v Connor*, injuries do not automatically constitute excessive force when the force used is objectively reasonable and necessary to overcome resistance.

5. Scene Safety and Management

Prior to the altercation in front of Sunday's Diner, the Quakertown Borough Police Department employed multiple measures to ensure scene safety and effective management. Although events of this nature are often unpredictable, the department adapted to changing conditions while maintaining a focus on public safety. This was evident in the extensive planning phase and the strategic placement of both uniformed and plainclothes personnel.

When protestors moved into the roadway, officers stopped vehicle traffic to protect students and repeatedly directed them to remain on the sidewalks. The department continued to adapt to evolving conditions and maintained its original plan to police from a distance. When the scene became chaotic, additional officers were summoned without delay to preserve scene safety and maintain control.

When arrests became necessary, they were conducted with regard for the safety of the offenders, officers, and bystanders.

6. Communications to the Public at Scene and Post-Incident

Several examples of communication with the public were noted throughout this investigation. Officers communicated with protestors several times throughout the incident, advising them to remain peaceful and to stay within the boundaries established for their safety.

When arrests were made, officers were observed on body-worn camera explaining the arrest process to those in custody. Officers contacted the parents of those arrested and provided status updates regarding their children. One officer also assisted a parent in locating a lost cell phone.

Officers were seen communicating with arrestees, suspected store owners, and bystanders. Incidents of this nature are often difficult to explain in real time due to their unpredictable and dynamic nature, especially during a public demonstration that becomes disorderly. In most police-public interactions, there is time to explain police actions as they occur, yet in some situations, it is not possible.

In rapidly developing incidents, split-second decision-making may be the difference between safety and harm, or even life and death. When a scene becomes chaotic, as it did in this event, the priority must remain public safety, and the opportunity for public explanation becomes limited.

7. Detainee Care and Treatment

All detainees were treated with dignity and respect before, during, and after the arrest process. Officers were professional, and several were observed on body-worn camera explaining the nature of the arrests, assessing for injuries, and what to expect during the booking process. As previously noted, all force used by officers was appropriate and reasonable.

EMS personnel was appropriately contacted to evaluate some of the offenders for medical injuries they may have sustained and one of the offenders was taken to a local hospital for treatment.

8. Supervision and Span of Control

According to the officers listed in the Quakertown Borough Police Department incident report, supervision was present in the form of two command-level officers, the Chief of Police, and a Lieutenant, as well as two Sergeants. The initial planning and response also included four Patrol Officers, one School Resource Officer, and one Detective. This provided adequate supervision, with responsibilities across multiple areas. Their span of control was effective and fell within the acceptable standards of policing.

9. Overall Policy Review

The Quakertown Borough Police Department is an accredited agency that operates under recognized standards and best practices.

10. Overall Performance

The Quakertown Borough Police Department's response to this event was professional, coordinated, and responsive to rapidly changing conditions. The department demonstrated advanced planning, appropriate supervision, and a measured tactical approach that prioritized public safety while allowing students to exercise their First Amendment rights.

Although the event became increasingly disorderly at points, officers made repeated attempts to de-escalate and maintain control without resorting to force. When arrests became necessary, officers acted in a manner that was reasonable, restrained, and consistent with the laws governing the use of force.

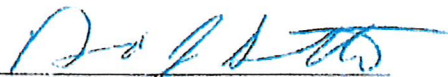
Recommendations

1. Chief McElree was not clearly identifiable as a police officer on that day. His vehicle had emergency lights activated, he parked in front of the place of occurrence, and according to his report, verbally identified himself. He was also acting in coordination with uniformed officers; however, best practice requires that he be clearly and visibly identifiable as law enforcement. If in plain clothes, a badge or other police markings, should be able to be prominently displayed when required or needed.
2. In cases where non-uniformed personnel are utilized, it would be recommended to have pre-determined, uniformed "arrest teams" that can respond to and handle arrest situations.
3. All police personnel should be equipped with body worn cameras (BWC) during events of this nature.
4. Incidents of this nature garner significant interests, opinions, and media coverage. One effective method to reduce community tensions, is to provide clear and transparent messages to your community through press conferences, press releases, or social media releases. This did not happen in this case and was probably the result of Chief McElree being directly involved. A public relations plan should be adopted and practiced.

The members of the panel acknowledge the confidence placed in the Police Chiefs Association of Bucks County to render an impartial, thorough and objective assessment of the incident. This report was based solely on the evaluation of the documentation and digital videos provided by Quakertown Borough.

Should you have any questions or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the Police Chiefs Association of Bucks County.

Sincerely,


David Scirrotto, Chief
Buckingham Township Police Department


William McVey, Director of Public Safety
Bensalem Township Police Department


Richard Ciampa, Chief
Morrisville Borough Police Department


Dominic Varacallo, Chief
Upper Southampton Police Department


Joseph Bartorilla, President
Police Chiefs Association of Bucks County
Chief, Middletown Township Police Department

Exhibit 1 – Addendum to Review Dated April 8, 2026. This addendum was prepared on 4-13-26

On April 10, 2026, Peter Nelson, the Quakertown Solicitor, contacted Director McVey to advise the Chief's Review Panel that there were additional videos added to the collection of videos previously sent via Dropbox. The footage was forwarded on April 8, after the initial after-action review had been completed; therefore, it was not considered by the review board in its original report. He requested the new videos be reviewed and our evaluation of them be included to the original report.

Upon examination, it was determined that the new footage depicts the same events from angles slightly different from those previously reviewed.

At approximately 1 minute and 28 seconds into the first video, a physical interaction is observed on the front sidewalk of Sunday's Deli. The video appears to have been recorded on a cellular phone from a position northwest of Sunday's. The interaction lasts approximately two seconds. The footage shows a female offender moving directly toward Chief McElree, who is standing in front of her. The female offender appears to throw a strike with her right hand toward Chief McElree, who responded with a hand strike that appears to connect with the female offender's head, which caused both of them to fall to the ground.

When compared with the videos reviewed during the initial assessment, the newly obtained footage indicates that the interaction between the female offender and Chief McElree occurred after the initial altercation in which Chief McElree was physically attacked by the same female offender and two other offenders.

A separate video appears to have been recorded after the altercation shown in Video 1. In this video, an unknown female, who appears to be recording the scene, can be heard asking two students questions about the incident that had just occurred. While filming the students, she asks, "Who hit the cop?" One of the students responds, "My friend." When asked to identify the friend, the second student identifies the female offender by her full name. The second student further states that the female offender was injured because the "old guy punched her back," indicating that Chief McElree only responded after being struck. The two students are then asked who hit whom first, and one student says, "The cops, I believe," while the other adds, "The cops were grabbing people and the kids defended themselves."

In another video, Chief McElree is observed being punched by multiple offenders and knocked to the ground. The angle of this video clearly depicts another female offender kicking Chief McElree three times as he is on the ground defenseless, while simultaneously being punched by other offenders. Captured pictures of this part of the assault were included in Exhibit 2.

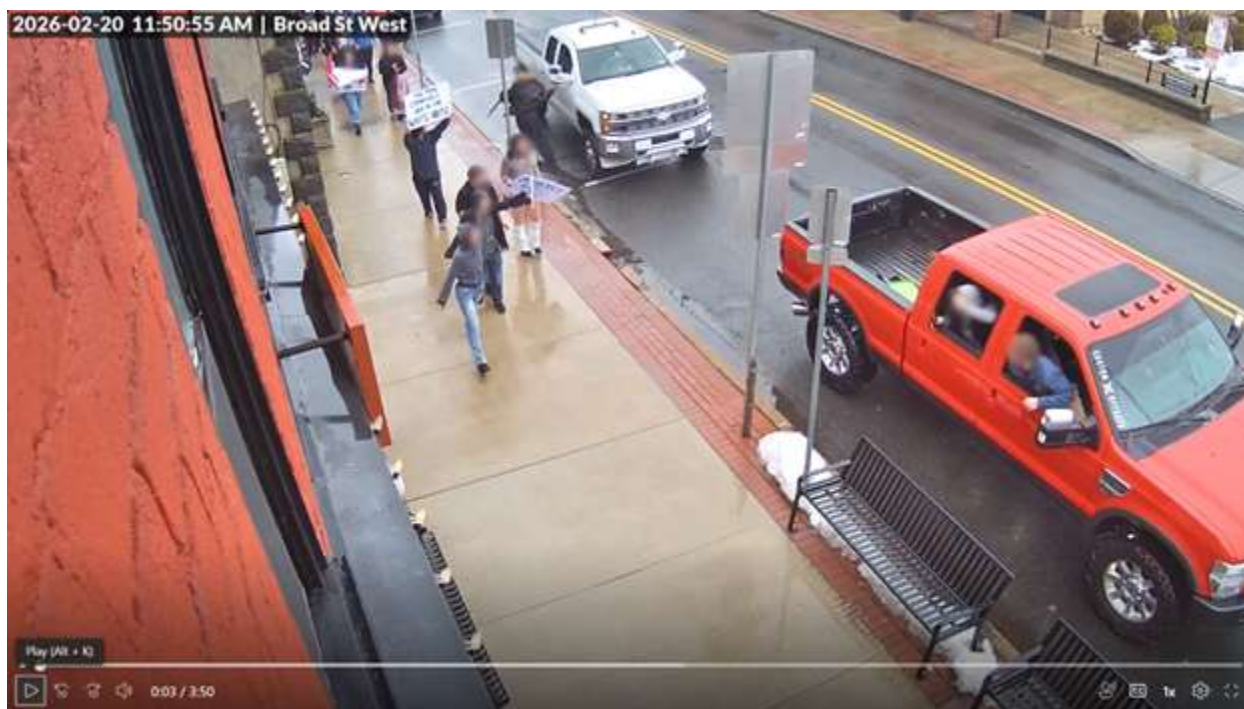
The footage contained in these additional videos supports the conclusions reached in the initial after-action review. After multiple warnings to cease dangerous and unlawful behavior, several students were identified as offenders, and lawful arrests based on probable cause were initiated. When officers attempted to effectuate the arrests, they encountered immediate resistance, including students breaking away from the grasp of uniformed law enforcement officers, students physically obstructing officers while attempting to pull others away, and an outright physical assault in which multiple students simultaneously threw closed-fist blows at Chief McElree, while he was standing and after he had been knocked to the ground.

The single strike thrown by Chief McElree was clearly in response to being struck. Moreover, the force used by Chief McElree was objectively reasonable under the circumstances and proportionate to the resistance he faced. While Chief McElree may have been justified in using higher levels of force, he instead exercised restraint by delivering a single hand strike in response to the barrage of blows directed at him.

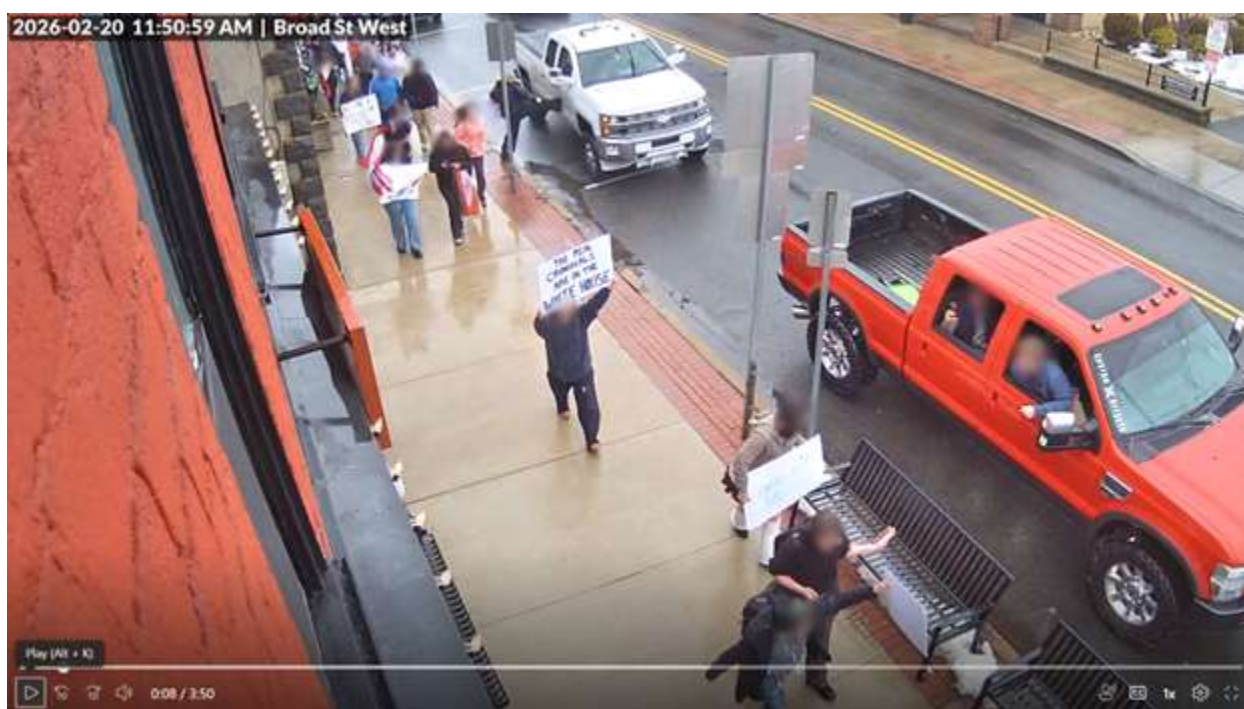
The student offenders on February 20, 2026 demonstrated a blatant disregard for constitutional law and a profound disrespect for the uniformed law enforcement presence, whose main mission from the outset of the event was to ensure the safety of the students.

The Panel's conclusion after considering these new videos remains the same, the actions of Chief McElree and the members of the Quakertown Borough Police Department were justified and within police policy.

Exhibit 2

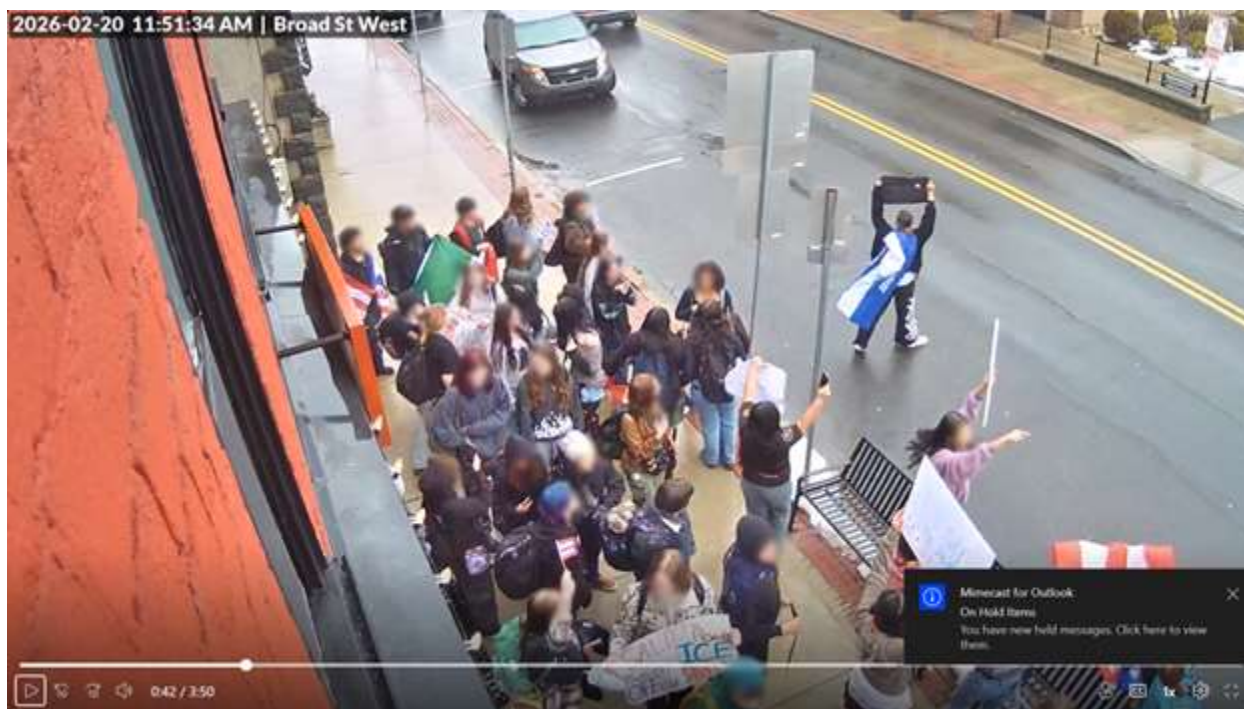


Protester punching the sideview mirror of the white pick-up truck

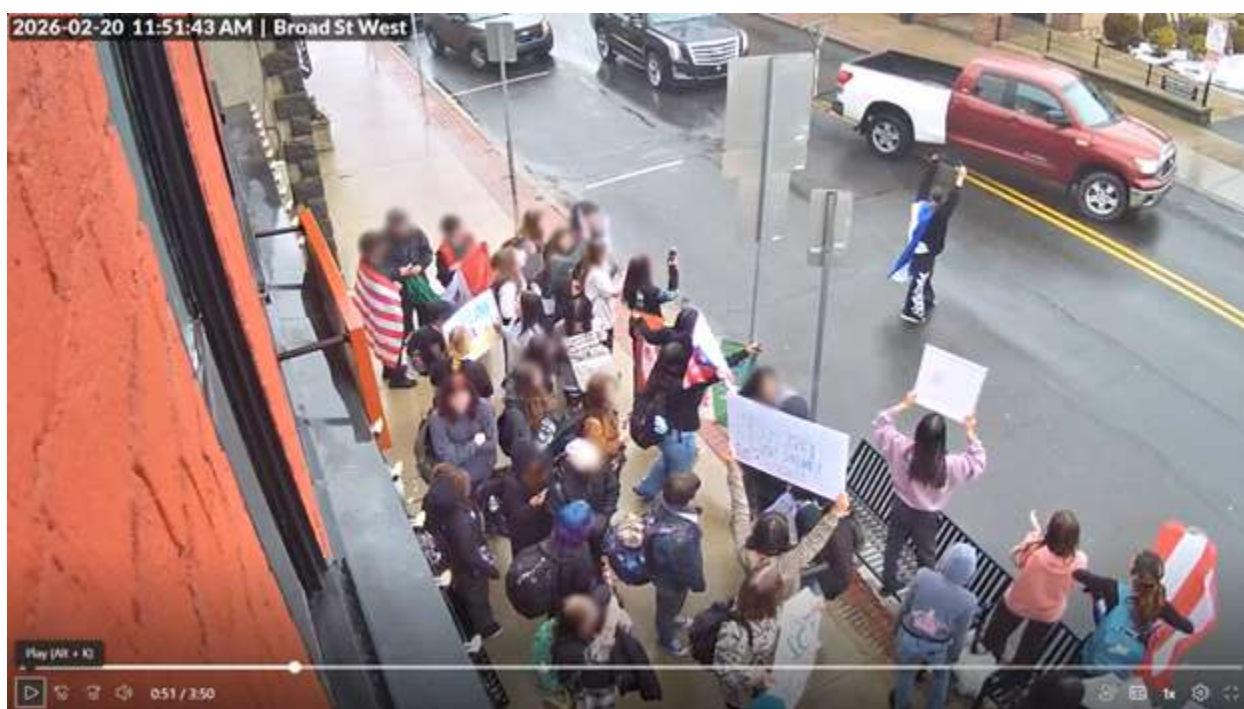


Protester kicking the passenger side door of the white pick-up truck

Exhibit 2



Protester blocking traffic and causing a safety hazard



Protester blocking traffic and causing a safety hazard

Exhibit 2



Protester throwing an ice ball at a passing vehicle



Lt. Mallery attempting to arrest the offender prior to offender pulling away

Exhibit 2



Lt. Mallery pointing out the protester/offender he attempted to arrest



Protesters blocking the offender Lt. Mallery was attempting to arrest

Exhibit 2

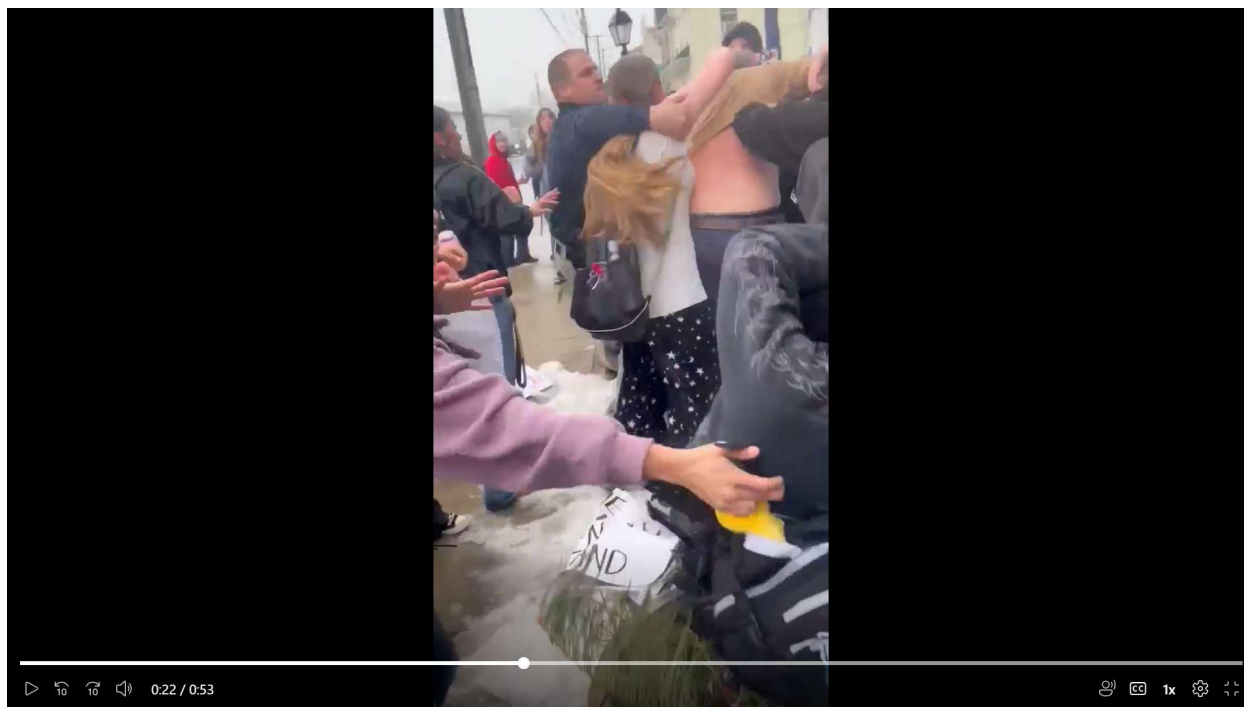


Offender grabbing Chief McElree and swinging cell phone at his head as the Chief moved in

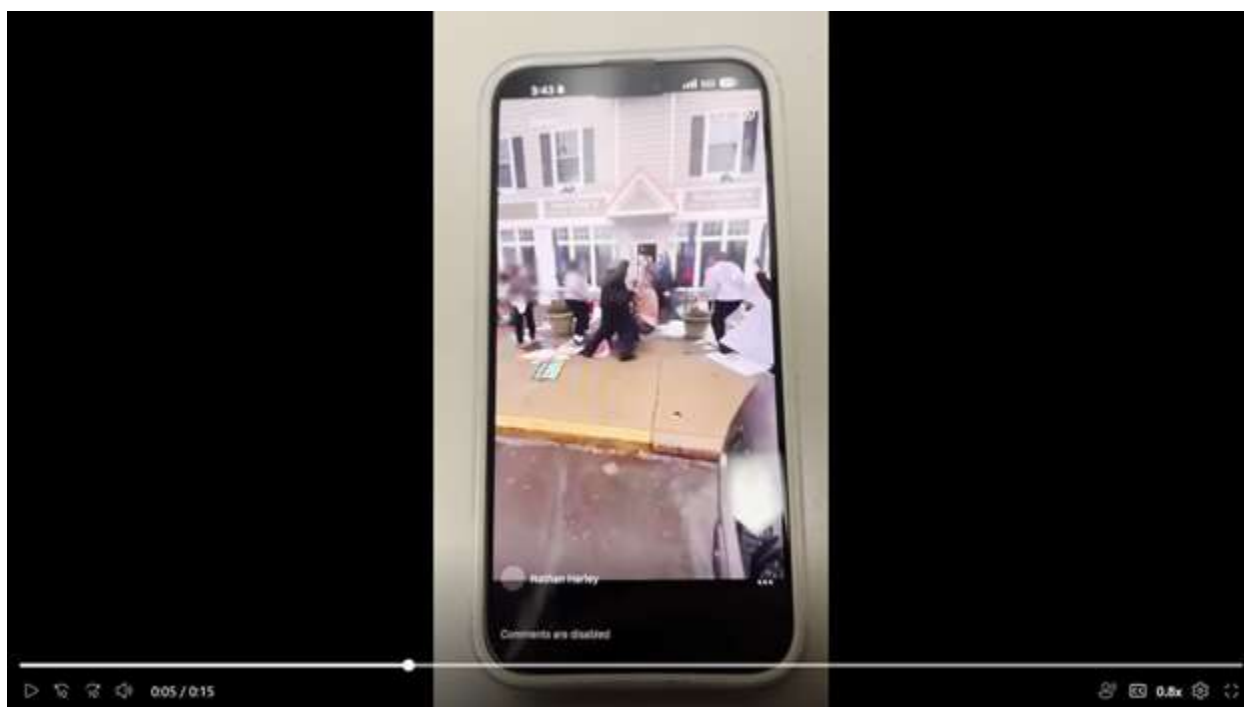


Offender striking Chief McElree in the head with a cell phone as an impact weapon

Exhibit 2



Offender striking Chief McElree in the back of the head with a fist



Offender striking Chief McElree in the head with fist and knocking the Chief to the ground

Exhibit 2

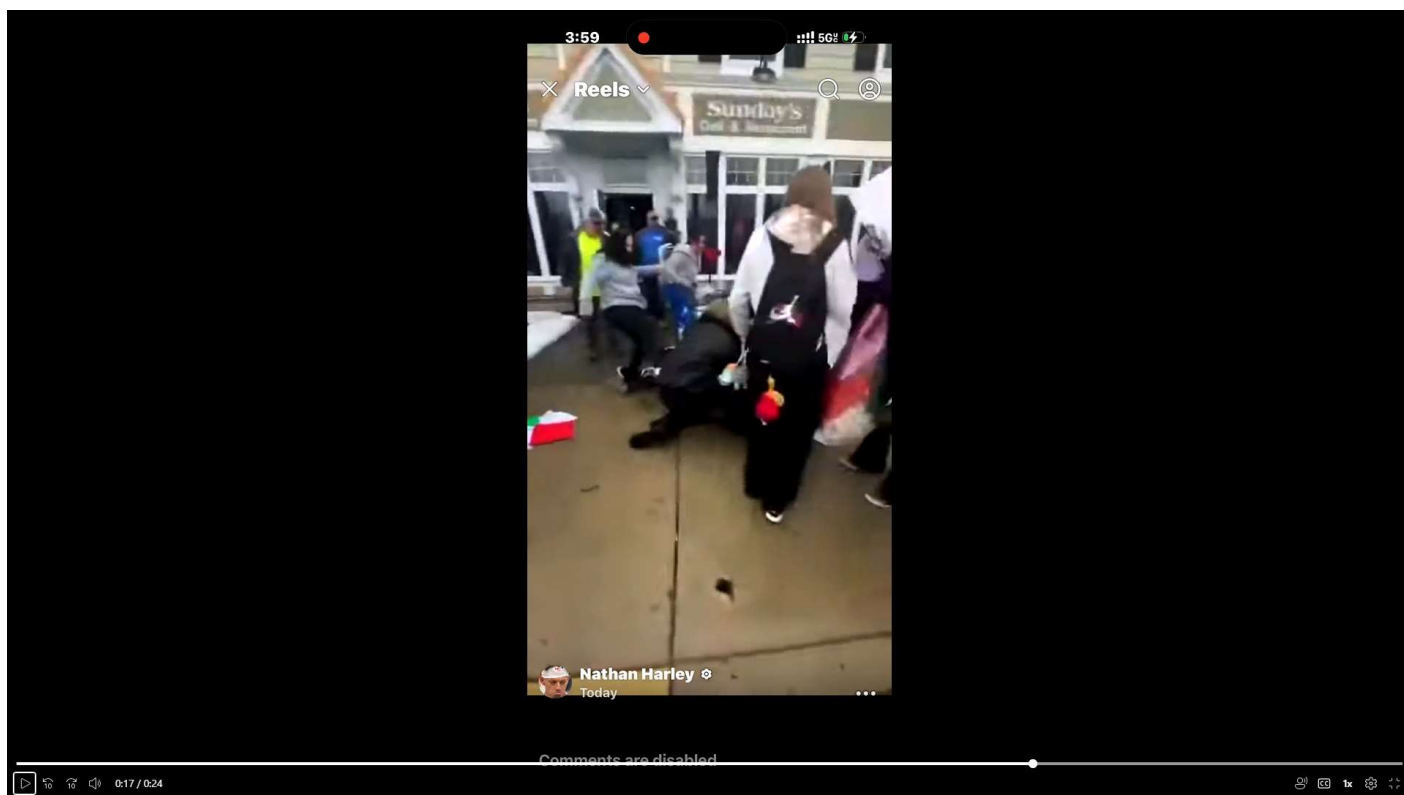


Chief McElree being struck in the head by an offender's right fist



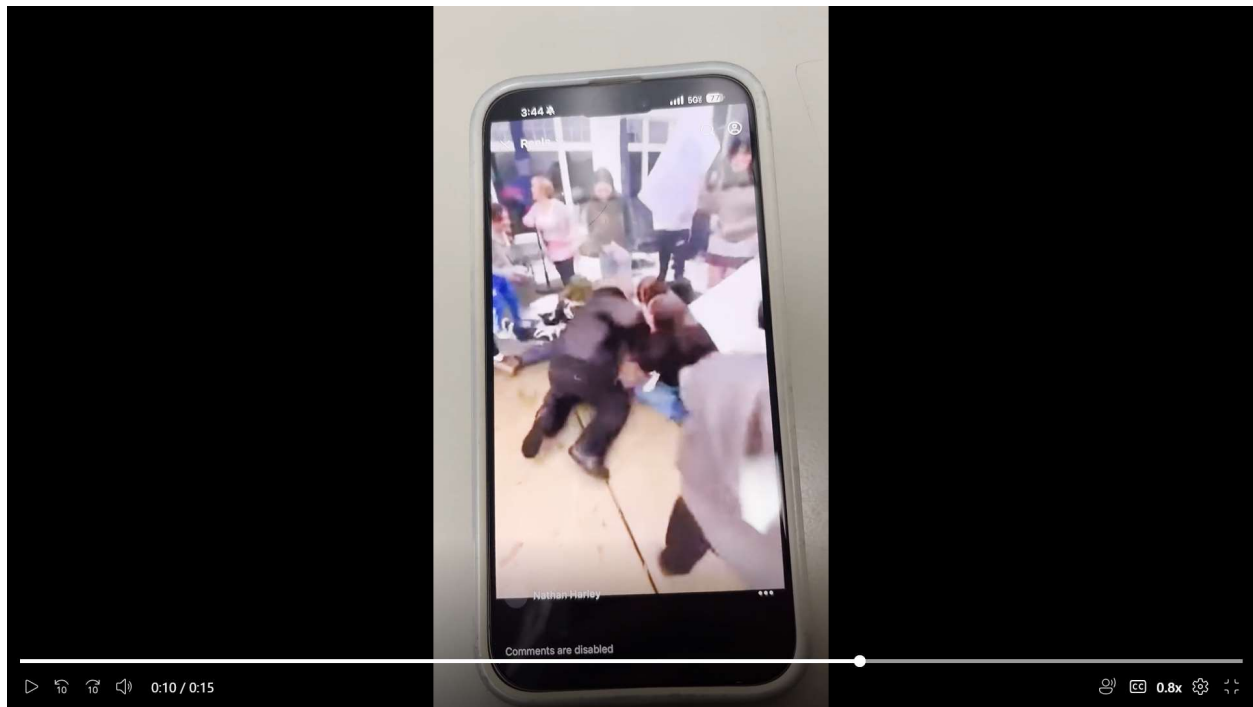
Chief McElree delivers a closed fist strike to the area of an offender's head in response to being assaulted

Exhibit 2

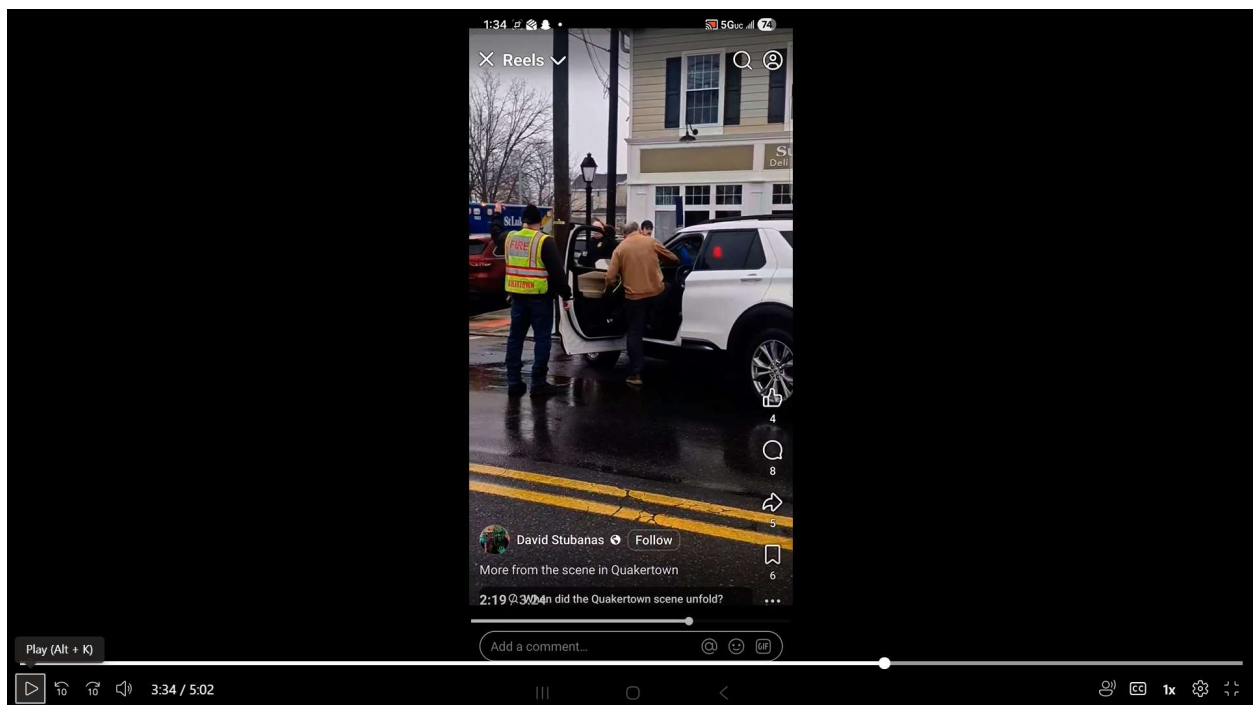


Offender kicking Chief McElree three times while he is defenseless on the ground and being punched by multiple other offenders

Exhibit 2



Offender continuing to strike Chief McElree in the head with a fist while the Chief was on the ground



Chief McElree getting into his vehicle after the assault with emergency lights still activated in front of Sunday's

Exhibit 3

David Scirrotto

Chief of Buckingham Township Police Department since 2024

Municipal Police Officer since 1992

Prior to that he served in the US Air Force Security Police and Dept. of Veterans Affairs Police in Philadelphia (1987-1992)

Chief of Lower Moreland PD - 2018-2024

Selected to Committees by the Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commission to modernize the Basic Control Tactics Curriculum for the State of Pennsylvania and implemented the first ever mandatory in-service Physical Control Tactics program for all 22,000 municipal police officers

Chief Scirrotto manages the Control Tactics Programs for both the Temple University and Montgomery County Community College Police Academies

Experienced Instructor with a demonstrated history of working in the higher education industry

Skilled in Leadership, Law Enforcement, Emergency Management, Physical Security, Field Training, Criminal Investigations, and Patrol

Dominic Varacallo

Chief of Upper Southampton Police Department since 2021

Police Officer since 1994

25 years in Warminster Police Department

13 years as a Command Officer

3 years as a transit police officer with Septa

Former Defensive Tactics Instructor

Force-Science Certified

Graduate of Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command

Serves on the Communications Advisory Board for the Bucks County Chiefs Association

William McVey

Director of Public Safety (Chief of Police), Bensalem Township Police Department

Municipal Police Officer since 1998

28 years of experience in law enforcement with Bensalem Police Department, with over 20 years of supervisory/command experience

Appointed to Director of Public Safety in January of 2022

Oversees 107 sworn police officers and Bensalem Fire Rescue, while also responsible for the volunteer fire service and EMS

Graduate of Northwestern University's School of Police Staff and Command and the Police Executive Research Forum's

Senior Management Institute for Police

Currently enrolled in the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) Executive Leaders Program

Past President of Police of Chiefs Association of Southeastern PA

Executive board member for PA Chiefs of Police Association and the Bucks County Chiefs Association

Richard Ciampa

Chief of Morrisville Borough Police Department since 2024

Police Officer since 1999

27 years in law enforcement beginning in Freehold, NJ

Has 15 years of supervisory and administrative experience while in NJ

Certified instructor in Use of Force, Firearms, taught in-service training and recruits at police academy

Member of the CJAB Central Booking Committee

Serves on the Communications Advisory Board for the Bucks County Chiefs Association