



PUBLIC COMMENT – Budget Hearing Continuation, May 25, 2026 – Third Supplemental Submission with Evidence of the Retaliation Machinery, the \$226 Million Settlement Record, and the Systemic Violation of Constitutional Rights

1 message

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Tue, May 26, 2026 at 10:24 AM

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Office of the City Clerk
200 North Spring Street, City Hall – Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: PUBLIC COMMENT – Budget Hearing Continuation, May 21, 2026 – Third Supplemental Submission with Evidence of the Retaliation Machinery, the \$226 Million Settlement Record, and the Systemic Violation of Constitutional Rights

Dear City Clerk and Members of the City Council,

This is my third supplemental submission to the ongoing Budget Hearing. My prior submissions dated May 18 and May 20, 2026, documented the architecture of the surveillance apparatus targeting homeless Angelenos and the data pipeline that algorithmically denies shelter. Since those filings, I have obtained three new pieces of evidence that elevate this record from documentation of a problem to proof of a systemic, institutionalized machinery of retaliation, secrecy, and fiscal hemorrhage. I incorporate these materials by reference and summarize them below.

I. THE PRATT CASE AND THE PROTECTIVE ORDER VEIL

I have now obtained the Joint Stipulation and Protective Order entered in Brian Pratt v. City of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Superior Court Case No. 21STCV27248, signed by Judge Gail Killefer on July 13, 2022. This is the case that reached a tentative settlement on May 18, 2026, just three days ago.

The Protective Order is a document of extraordinary scope. It allows the City and the LAPD to designate virtually any document, testimony, or information as "Confidential" simply by affixing the word to each page. It binds every expert, every witness, every mock juror to silence. It requires that

any inadvertently produced document be immediately destroyed or returned. And it provides that, at the conclusion of the case, all Confidential Materials must be returned to the City or destroyed.

This is how the machine protects itself. Captain Pratt alleged that Deputy Chief Blake Chow and Commander Michael Oreb misused Metro-funded transit personnel for non-transit purposes, and then retaliated against him with a masked personnel complaint and placement on the ORWITS dishonesty list. The Protective Order ensures that the evidence supporting those allegations—the emails, the personnel records, the internal communications—will never see the light of day. The settlement on May 18 means the City paid to make this case disappear before the full truth could emerge. The public is left with a payout of an undisclosed amount and a command structure that remains intact, its members promoted to oversee the 2028 Olympics and absorbed into Metro's new Department of Public Safety.

II. THE DA'S RENAMED RETALIATION TOOL: ORWITS BECOMES INFORM

I have obtained Special Directive 25-06, issued by District Attorney Nathan J. Hochman on September 18, 2025, reconfiguring the Officer and Recurrent Witness Information Tracking System (ORWITS) into the Information Notification for Officers and Recurrent-Witness Materials (INFORM).

The Directive is a masterwork of bureaucratic camouflage. It claims the new name signifies the database's "primary function as an informational database." It warns deputy district attorneys not to use the terms "Brady, INFORM, or DCS" in any public document. It instructs prosecutors to note only "DCS check performed" in internal files, without any reference to what was found. And it explicitly states that the LADA "continues to assert all applicable privileges over INFORM, as it did over ORWITS."

This is the tool that was used against Captain Pratt. He was placed on ORWITS, his career destroyed, his name permanently stained. The DA's office is now rebranding the same system with a friendlier name while preserving every privilege, every secrecy provision, and every mechanism for destroying officers who report misconduct. The Directive was issued in September 2025—the same month the Metro Board approved the \$150 million litigation settlement. A coordinated pattern of institutional self-protection is evident across multiple agencies and departments.

III. THE \$226 MILLION SETTLEMENT REPORT: THE PRICE OF THE MACHINE

I have obtained the City Attorney's Bi-Monthly Report on Approved Settlements and Judgments, Report No. R25-0270, filed May 28, 2025, covering the fiscal year through April 30, 2025. The report reveals that the City of Los Angeles paid 226,070,246.99 in settlemen

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ts during this period, with an addit

ts during this period, with an additional

32,846,939.20 pending

payment—a total of over a quarter billion dollars in a single fiscal year.

Within this total, I draw the Council's attention to specific entries that directly corroborate the pattern I have been documenting for this body.

Whistleblower Retaliation Payouts:

- Whittingham, Byford Peter v. City of L.A. — 370,000. Captain Peter Whittingham served as Commanding Officer of the Criminal Gang Homicide Division under then–Deputy Chief Bill Scott at Operations–South Bureau. The City paid 370,000. *Captain Peter Whittingham served as Commanding Officer of the Criminal Gang Homicide Division under then–Deputy Chief Bill Scott at Operations–South Bureau. The City paid 370,000 to settle his retaliation claim.* This is Scott’s direct subordinate, retaliated against by the same command culture Scott oversaw, now being paid by the taxpayers for the harm he suffered.
- Sauvao, Mark (CAO) — \$9,030,000 (verdict, pending payment). This is a jury verdict for retaliation against an LAPD officer.
- Joaquin, Richard v. City — \$2,633,049.92 (verdict). Another retaliation verdict against the LAPD.
- Brown, Raymond v. City — \$451,250. Retaliation.
- Moreno, Rocio v. City — \$640,000. Retaliation.
- Wheldon, Kristen v. City — \$1,631,565.63. Retaliation against the Fire Department.
- Buckman, Shirin — \$2,071,700.61 (verdict, pending). Retaliation against the Housing Department.

These seven cases alone total over \$17 million. They represent a documented, department-wide culture of retaliating against employees who report misconduct. The command structure that generated these payouts—the LAPD Transit Services Bureau under Blake Chow and Michael Oreb, the South Bureau under Bill Scott, the larger LAPD apparatus—remains in place, its leaders promoted and its practices replicated inside Metro’s new Department of Public Safety.

CPRA Violations—The City Pays When Caught Withholding Records:

- Stop LAPD Spying Coalition v. City — \$112,000.
- Wagner-Hollier, Roxane v. City — \$190,000.

These two cases total \$302,000 in payouts for violating the California Public Records Act. I have filed 65 CPRA requests. They remain unanswered. The City is paying hundreds of thousands of dollars because it refuses to comply with its legal obligations, and my requests are part of this documented pattern of systemic non-compliance.

Police Professional Negligence and Civil Rights Violations:

The settlement report contains dozens of entries for “Professional Negligence - Police,” wrongful death, excessive force, and crowd control cases. Representative examples include: French v. City

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(17,700,000); Corado v. City (00,000); *Corado v. City* (9,500,000); Lopez v. City

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(8,000,000); Stewart v. City (0,000); *Stewart v. City* (1,500,000); Hill v. City

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(1,500,000); Shakir v. City (,000); *Shakir v. City* (3,600,000). These are not isolated incidents.

They are the recurring cost of a policing culture that this Council funds and that Metro’s new

Department of Public Safety is now replicating with the same personnel and the same command philosophy.

IV. THE ARCHITECTURE OF DENIAL: SYNTHESIS OF EVIDENCE

The Council now has before it a complete, cross-referenced record:

- The Pratt Protective Order (July 2022) shows how the City seals evidence of retaliation from public view.
- The DA's INFORM Directive (September 2025) shows how the retaliation tool has been rebranded but preserved, its secrecy provisions intact.
- The Metro \$150 Million Settlement (September 2025) shows how the transit agency hides its largest liabilities from public explanation.
- The City Attorney's Settlement Report (May 2025) shows the quarter-billion-dollar price tag of the policing and secrecy culture, including retaliation against Bill Scott's own subordinates.
- The Metro FY27 Proposed Budget (May 2026) shows that the same command structure, the same surveillance technology, and the same "care-based" language are being funded at \$430 million for the coming year.

V. SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

In light of this newly obtained evidence, I respectfully request that the City Council:

1. Direct the City Attorney to release the Pratt settlement agreement in unredacted form to this Council, or provide a detailed written explanation of the legal basis for withholding it from the public that funds these settlements.
2. Direct the LAPD to publicly disclose the number of officers currently listed in the INFORM database, the criteria for placement, the process for appeal, and the number of officers who have been placed on the list after filing internal complaints or whistleblower reports.
3. Direct the City Administrative Officer to prepare a consolidated report of all retaliation settlements paid by the City over the past ten years, broken down by department, including the Pratt settlement, and to identify any commonalities in the command structures that generated them.
4. Demand that Metro publicly itemize the 524.5millionProfessionalan
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cesline, disclosethefullnatureo
dTechnicalServicesline, disclosethefullnatureofthefthe
million settlement, and produce a civil rights impact assessment for the AI surveillance tools
being deployed. 150
5. Direct LAHSA to immediately freeze the use of algorithmic shelter eligibility determinations until an independent civil rights assessment is completed.
6. Affirm the right of all individuals to access public libraries free from targeted surveillance or interference.

VI. CONCLUSION

I have placed the truth before you in meticulous detail. The quarter-billion-dollar settlement record. The protective orders that seal evidence from the public. The renamed retaliation database. The data pipeline that denies shelter to the unhoused. The surveillance apparatus that tracks and profiles vulnerable people.

I am not a risk score. I am a human being. I am asking you to lead with the courage and authenticity this moment demands.

Respectfully,

Jonathan M. Portela
[roton Mail](#) secure email.