

January 7, 2026

My name is Betsy Wehrwein. I have lived in Saint Paul for most of my life. I have four adult sons and they grew up with at least two members that are sitting on the City Council right now. I am also an awarded community organizer from our beloved West Side. My name hangs on a plaque in the hall of this building. So I have some history and know some things.

I am entering the following statement into the record.

I am here today because I was leaving my local coop on November 18, 2025 and I accidentally drove smack into the Bro-Text raid. It took me a moment to figure out what was happening. It was a surprise to me. And I personally witnessed a SPPD officer standing next to two ICE agents in Hampden Avenue – who were blocking the street. The ICE agents were banging on the front hood of my car and telling me I had no right to be on this street so I could get to where I needed to go to next, while they were letting their vehicles go through. While I was experiencing this behavior from these two ICE agents, I saw an African American SPPD officer just standing there next to them. I thought, "What is the SPPD doing here?" And, to be perfectly honest, I wasn't angry at all because of what the ICE agents were doing and saying to me, because they were acting like the stereotypical agents. But, I could feel my blood boil in the front seat of my car because this officer from my city was there.

I let this all sit for a week or so and then I made the decision that I had to do something. So I got training and became a nonviolent observer.

I want to talk about a particular incident that I witnessed as a nonviolent observer.

On Friday, January 2, 2026 before during and after 2:00 in the afternoon, I was on site and witnessed a Mazda CX-90 vehicle with a specific license plate number at a SPPD incident near the intersection of Stillwater and Nokomis in Saint Paul. During this activity I was notified that this vehicle and plate number had also been seen at the Bro-Text raid in Saint Paul on November 18. As a result of this, I wanted to know more. I saw a white male in tactical gear accessing this vehicle, but he would not talk to me or others who were on site observing. He was wearing a vest with HSI on it. There is documentation to support what I am saying.

On that Friday as we were parked on a side street and not on any private property, one Saint Paul Police officer engaged with me and two other observers who were in the street and had gotten out of our cars, and told us we were impeding a violent situation and he made false statements to me and two other observers about our behavior.

So, this creates all sorts of questions that need answers.

What is SPPD doing with Homeland Security Investigation Agents? How is it that a vehicle involved in US Immigration and Customs Enforcement activities is also involved with the SPPD on January 2? Does it matter to the City of Saint Paul that its local law enforcement is collaborating with the same people who are terrifying Saint Paul's residents, families and workers? Without some very clear explanation from the City, we see with our own eyes and are thwarted and dismissed by official city behavior.

Hypothetically one could say, but he carries all the equipment in the back of his car to help us batter ram a door or access a safe or do some other sort of action when St Paul executes a search warrant. And they have so much more money than we do.

But isn't this like saying "Oh the famous and rich movie director is so talented, what does it matter if he sleeps with someone who is a minor." Or "He's the President of the United States so it really doesn't matter if he is guilty of a felony, right?"

This morning, on the website for the City of Saint Paul Police it says, "The Saint Paul Police Department promotes safe and healthy neighborhoods in Minnesota's capital city and works under the motto of service with purpose."

What is the purpose here? To make their job easier by inviting the fox into the hen house? I am here to ask you the farmers, how smart is that?

We don't need Saint Paul Police officers trying to combat peaceful observers with false statements about our behavior. We don't want them to collaborate with ICE or ICE to pal around with them. We need Saint Paul Police officers and its department and the City to understand that we are out in the streets filming ICE not because we have tick tock accounts or want to make the secretary of homeland security look cool.

We are out on the streets because there is a fascist power in our federal government that is out pounding on our streets and people and families today and THEY are trying to add to the trauma that is already embedded in the history of this city, the history of this land. The land we all stand on is filled with trauma. And I hope every white person in this place can understand that.

But this land is also filled with resilience. And I for one, have learned from the ancestors of this place and from my brothers and sisters here today that we will remain resilient. Does the official government of the City of Saint Paul want to join me and others who care about everyone in our community, our neighbors, people and families? Well then you better damn well get on board and do everything you can to turn this shit around.

This is a defining moment in all of our lives, in our city and in our country. What are you going to do?


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