



RIVERDALE PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT

5004 Queensbury Road
Riverdale Park, MD 20737

Phone: (301) 927-4343 FAX: (301) 927-0705

David C. Morris
Chief of Police

Message to Our Community Chief Morris and Assistant Chief Guixens

June 2, 2020

We write this letter with heavy hearts. Like most of the country, we watched in disbelief the events in Minneapolis unfold, shocked by the tragic and senseless death of Mr. George Floyd. We are outraged over the killing of Mr. Floyd and by the officers who stood by silently as he was dying. We have collectively served as law enforcement officers for nearly 60 years, all of it in Prince George's County, both as county police officers and now as your Chief and Assistant Chief of Police. Throughout our careers, we have never rushed to judgement based solely upon news reports. We have always encouraged others to do the same. The killing of Mr. Floyd last week in Minneapolis, however, is very different. Although this did not happen in Riverdale Park, the pain and fear that it has caused within our community is real.

No one can rationalize, explain, or justify the behavior, actions, or inactions of those Minneapolis police officers. What we watched in the video was nothing less than horrific. We were sickened as we watched a police officer kneeling on Mr. Floyd's neck as he lay handcuffed, face down, and pleading for help as he was dying. We are equally disgusted by the inaction of the other officers on the scene who lacked an ounce of courage to intercede on behalf of Mr. Floyd. The unwillingness, reluctance, and utter refusal of those officers to act responsibly contributed to Mr. Floyd's death, while simultaneously disgracing their department, their community, their city, their badge, their profession, and themselves. This is a tragedy of immeasurable proportion that was completely preventable. As police officers, we are here to protect; it is our fundamental duty. Any police officer who might think otherwise should look for another profession. The frustration, anger, and fear that everyone feels is well-founded.

During this past week, we have received emails and phone calls from residents who have expressed emotions ranging from concern to anxiety, from alarm to fear, and understandably so. To those who have reached out, we thank you. Thank you for asking the difficult and challenging question: How do we prevent this from happening in our community? It is this type of dialogue that promotes trust, transparency, and confidence between police departments and the communities we serve, and this is a good step forward.

To answer the question directly, we prevent such an event from happening here by working together, and by being unequivocal. Excessive force is unacceptable. Racism is unacceptable. Collectively, we must recognize the historic context of excessive force as it relates to people of color, and racism must be confronted by all of us. The sanctity of human life is the cornerstone of policing. The men and women of the Riverdale Park Police Department affirm, uphold, support, embrace, and embody this ideal.

In Riverdale Park, we work to maintain and grow our community's trust through transparency, outreach, and the adoption of best practices for policing in a free and democratic society. These efforts include:

- Use of modernized recruitment strategies for recruiting women and African American, Hispanic and other minority candidates to increase diversity within the department;
- Offering recruitment and retention incentives to attract quality individuals to serve as officers;
- Conducting thorough pre-employment background investigations including psychological and polygraph evaluations;
- Providing state certified training programs annually on proper use-of-force, de-escalation, and fair and impartial policing;
- Implementing in-car camera and body-worn camera programs;
- Establishing contemporary policies and procedures that govern the conduct of our officers;
- Developing community programs to engage participation between our community and their police department.

Each of these measures are purposefully intended to cultivate a culture of constitutional policing and accountability within the Riverdale Park Police Department.

The Riverdale Park Police Department remains dedicated to safeguarding our community, serving with pride and unparalleled commitment with integrity and professionalism. We recognize that we are not perfect. In this recognition, we ask that you join us. We ask that you join us in our outreach to and dialogue with the community as we expand our efforts to ensure that nothing like this ever occurs in our community.



David C. Morris
Chief of Police



Rosa M. Guixens
Assistant Chief of Police