June 4, 2020

An Open Letter to the Residents of Lake in the Hills

Since the horrific incident in Minneapolis, resulting in the death of George Floyd, I have received inquiries from residents concerned for their community and asking us the right questions. Residents want to know as a police department what are we doing to make sure unnecessary use-of-force incidents don’t happen here and how are we holding our officers accountable. Back in 2014, a young man named Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Several other high-profile police force incidents quickly followed. It was evident from the protest following the events that the public was demanding that we, as a law enforcement community, make changes. In our review of what was occurring, we knew we had to do more to demonstrate how we take ownership of our actions. We intensified our efforts to provide officers with the proper training, tools, and oversight for the appropriate use-of-force, if necessary, to bring a situation under control. The authority to use force carries with it the need for accountability to safeguard the rights of the public and preserve the integrity of the department.

In 2015, we instituted a complete revision of our use-of-force policy, making it more clear, concise, and easily understood. In 2016, we established a new policy requiring the automatic formal review of all use-of-force incidents, and we began tracking statistical data on events. We also started a comprehensive in-house training program, including cultural diversity and various topics relating to response to resistance incidents. Our in-house training program includes an annual review of the law, department policy, arrest tactics, less than lethal tools, and their application in both classroom and scenario-based training settings. In 2017, when the National Consensus Policy and Discussion Paper on Use of Force document was published we quickly adopted the best practices in the policy. This included de-escalation techniques and training for our officers. The department also adopted the Ten Shared Principles developed by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police and the Illinois NAACP. The Ten Shared Principles is a collaboration with the NAACP designed to bridge the gap of mistrust between the police and communities of color. In 2019, the FBI launched the National Use-of-Force Data Collection program as a voluntary effort to gather data on use-of-force incidents to provide a national view of use-of-force data. The department joined the program and submitted our data dating back to 2017.

Our department is accredited through the Illinois Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (ILEAP) by the Illinois Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation Council. Accreditation is an ongoing process where agencies are evaluated on policy and procedure as well as practice, against established criteria, and have their compliance with those criteria verified by an independent team of assessors. Our department is one of 38 agencies in Illinois to be
accredited through ILEAP. We currently hold Tier Two accreditation status and are in compliance with 180 standards.

Good practices, policy, training, and accreditation are important elements that form a strong foundation for setting a culture in the department that promotes professionalism. The question is, are we holding ourselves accountable and practicing our values on the streets and especially when officers use force? Between 2016 and 2019, our officers had 60,689 interactions with the public on calls for service. Of those contacts, 48 resulted in the use of a force application by officers. The department has an extremely low percentage of interactions, 0.079%, that culminated in the use of force to bring the situation under control. The majority of our 48 incidents only involved the use of manual restraints to effect the arrest of an uncooperative subject. The low amount of force use incidents is a testament to the professionalism of the officers who work here. It also demonstrates our efforts to minimize use-of-force conflicts are working.

I want to thank our residents who took the time to hold us accountable and asked us the hard questions. Policing our community can only be accomplished through a partnership with our residents, and we work hard to earn the respect of our community. One misstep can erase years of hard work and trust. We will continue to hold ourselves to high standards and transparency when it comes to the use-of-force. We understand the outrage and the need to be heard so meaningful change can come out of the senseless death of George Floyd. Please do it peacefully, so your message is not lost.

Sincerely,

David Brey
Chief of Police