



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Information Office
1315 S. Washington Avenue
Saginaw, MI 48601
Fax: 989 759-1607
Contact: Public Information Office, 989 759-1403

CITY OF SAGINAW ADDRESSES REQUESTED CHANGES IN POLICING

June 5, 2020 SAGINAW, MI – In the wake of recent tragic incidents involving police use of force and other issues, the legitimacy of the police has been questioned in many communities. The City of Saginaw understands the need for community involvement in policing and the need to review procedures and police interaction with citizens.

Racism has eroded trust and goodwill throughout our nation. However, we believe the future of policing in the City of Saginaw is ripe with potential. Now more than ever, our policing must continue to place an even greater emphasis on police-community partnerships, and a strong focus on equity, transparency, and accountability.

The focus of the Saginaw Police Department has been about building personal relationships, being proactive in addressing community concerns and working with partners to innovate new approaches to police work. The City of Saginaw remains committed to diligently addressing how we handle citizens and taking steps to improve community relations. These steps include working with Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority to develop training on dealing with individuals who are mentally ill, increased availability of less lethal equipment, as well as the purchase and implementation of body cameras for all road patrol officers. The police department now has School Resource Officers in local schools and Victim Services Advocates to better serve the citizens of Saginaw. The department has also established a partnership with the Saginaw Branch NAACP to produce public information videos to educate youth on how to

communicate with the police. The SPD conducts Implicit Bias training on a regular basis and is the site for monthly prayer meetings for local clergy.

Other steps include the development of the Saginaw ALPACT committee, which is comprised of leaders and members of the community, civil rights and civil liberties organizations, and leaders from the law enforcement community. This committee meets bi-monthly to examine issues affecting police and community relations to ensure equitable enforcement of laws including: racial profiling, police discretion, use of force, recruitment and training, citizen complaint processes, community partnering, and police leadership.

Several leaders and organizations have contacted the city with suggested changes that should be implemented by the Saginaw Police Department. The Saginaw Police Department maintains a use of force policy that is consistent with current national and legal standards. It is periodically reviewed by SPD command staff and the city attorney to ensure it remains in proper form. The policy takes into consideration a use of force continuum developed by the National Institute of Justice and contains guidelines as to how much force may be used against a resisting subject in a given situation. SPD Officers receive consistent training and understand that they are only allowed to use a level of force that is objectively reasonable to bring an incident under control. Actions such as those taken by the officers in Minneapolis are not contemplated by any policy of the Saginaw Police Department.

City Manager Tim Morales commented, "I am very proud of our police department and their efforts over the past few years to improve relations in our community. We have already implemented several policies and procedures to improve community interaction. But when tragedies occur like what recently happened in Minneapolis, it challenges all of us to dig deeper and review our practices and implement even greater changes."

The Saginaw Police Department is poised to launch new or expanded initiatives focused on creating transparency and implementing solutions that produce meaningful results in the community.

City officials are considering the implementation of a Citizen Review Board. The make-up and functions of the board are still in the developmental stage, but would likely include

developing strategies for bettering community and police interactions and would consist of a wide range of members from the community. The city will review the best examples throughout the country and what makes them successful so that anything developed in Saginaw may be of the highest quality.

Saginaw Police Chief Bob Ruth commented on the board, “We want to involve community leaders from diverse backgrounds. This will take some time and a lot of conversations. But we’ve heard the requests for a citizen review board and we’re confident Saginaw will have one we can be proud of.”

Through these efforts, the City hopes to develop recommendations and best practices designed to enhance the bonds of trust between law enforcement and citizens; and to present and recommend implementation strategies to law enforcement and community groups.

Police Chief Bob Ruth commented on the needed discussion, ““We are dedicated to helping people,” Ruth said. “This is a compassionate response to a nationwide problem. Many of the requested changes are already in place in our department. But we are always willing to review our policies and address concerns from the community.”

This approach requires constant flexibility to respond to all emerging issues with proactive problem-solving solutions that involve the community as well as police officers.

“We have an ongoing commitment to reevaluate our policies and programs, and introduce new initiatives as needed,” Ruth said. “We know Saginaw is a special place with unique needs, and we want to be responsive to our community.”

###