



June 17, 2020

An Open Letter to the Citizens of Wheaton

Recent events in our area and throughout the country have generated many questions and sparked a national debate about policing and racism. The City and I, as Chief of Police, have received inquiries seeking answers about a myriad of topics. We would like to address these questions for the community to help educate you on our practices and to further our discussions on policing as it occurs in Wheaton.

The City has received a number of inquiries as to what our professional opinion is about the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota. George Floyd's murder was tragic, disturbing, and difficult to watch as a police officer and a human being. There was no justification for the involved police officers' actions and inactions. To hear George Floyd beg for help while the police officers did nothing to aid him is disturbing on a human level. Onlookers were begging the police officers to stop, and their pleas were ignored.

Take crimes, use of force, authority, resistance, or any other issue out of the equation. A human being pleaded for his life, and they did nothing to help him. Those officers are being held accountable. They have been fired, criminally charged, and will now face a trial. Police officers must have compassion, empathy, and integrity. The officers involved failed on so many levels. I am appalled by what happened and will do my utmost as the Chief of Police to ensure that fair, equitable, respectful policing occurs in Wheaton.

We have also received questions about Wheaton Police Department operations in relation to police tactics. Below, I would like to address several areas related to how the Wheaton Police Department operates and the standards we use.

Body-Worn Cameras

Officers are not required to use body-worn cameras, and we do not have body-worn cameras. Every patrol squad car is equipped with cameras and microphones, and their use is required for all traffic stops. Wheaton Police Officers have been recording traffic stops for more than 20 years. Random samples of these recordings are inspected by supervisors monthly to ensure our policies and principles are being followed.

The use of body-worn cameras is a complex issue with regard to recording persons at all times, especially in places where individuals have a right to privacy. Legislation in Illinois does not support recording persons without their approval, except after committing a traffic offense and certain crimes.

Although recording systems and the associated costs are high, money is not the primary factor for not equipping officers with body cameras. When the legislation, public opinion, and monetary costs align, this decision will be revisited. There is little doubt body-worn cameras will be a part of legislation that has been and is being introduced on both the state and federal levels. In the interim, any additional



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resources are spent ensuring we hire persons with the values and ethics essential for policing, providing officers with quality training, and having supervisory safeguards in place.

Use of Force by Police

Force is only applied in direct response to resistance of an arrest, to protect the life of another or the officer, or protect an individual from self-harm. [Our use of force policy is available on the City's website.](#)

Our policy does not allow officers to use chokeholds under any circumstance. We do not train our officers to use chokeholds under any circumstances. It is not an accepted control technique and is therefore not approved for use.

To provide some context to our application of force during arrests, in 2019, our officers handled 54,859 incidents. We conducted 804 custodial arrests. Only 10 of those arrests involved the use of force to complete the arrest. Of those 10 arrests, only one individual received minor injuries, and none filed a complaint of abuse of force. Each use of force was investigated by a supervisor. The investigations concluded that in all 10 instances, officers conformed to policy, and their use of force was both reasonable and necessary to complete the arrest. The officers were found to have properly applied force and then properly de-escalated.

The Wheaton Police Department requires officers to complete de-escalation training along with use of force training. In 2019, we performed internal training totaling 135 hours of lecture and scenarios on force escalation/de-escalation. The same year had external training on use of force totaling 1020 hours.

Training related to de-escalation would also include crisis intervention training, which focuses on police response and interaction with persons suffering from mental illness or in mental health crisis. We performed an additional 708 hours of crisis intervention training in 2019 to support our goal of having all our officers certified in crisis intervention.

We also partnered with the DuPage County Health Department in a pilot mental health program that provided for immediate assistance to police officers in dealing with individuals in crisis. The DuPage County Crisis Center would be contacted by officers and would provide telephone support, respond to the scene or a neutral site, or the person in crisis could be voluntarily transported to the center for care.

Training Standards

In 2018, the Wheaton Police Department completed more than 10,000 hours of training. The training included state-mandated training in Civil Rights, Constitutional & Proper Use of Authority, Cultural Competency, Human Rights, and Procedural Justice. This mandated training must be repeated in 2021. All new police officers hired since 2018 have received these training topics in the basic police academy. These topics touch upon bias, implicit and explicit racial bias, and police legitimacy.

Police officers must qualify a minimum of one time per year for firearms training. In 2019, a total of 280 hours was recorded for training in firearms. The training goes far beyond simple accuracy. The training includes dynamic scenarios, shoot/don't-shoot judgement, and knowledge of policy and law.

In addition, Wheaton Police Officers receive internal and external training in many different policing topics to improve their overall competency and ensure their professional development. We believe in continual education and training for our officers and supervisors. We promote competence and character to help ensure our officers are prepared and make good decisions.

In 2019, the department far exceeded state mandates by completing more than 11,000 hours of training in various policing topics, e.g. use of force, procedures, mental health, tactics. Every police officer is currently in compliance with all state-mandated training. The State of Illinois mandates the following training schedule for police officers:

- **EVERY YEAR:** Firearm Qualification, Law Updates, Use of Force, Hazmat, Sheriffs/ Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs (Training by assignment)
- **EVERY TWO YEARS:** CPR/AED (While there is no requirement for refresher courses on Narcan, agencies may attach a refresher to CPR/AED recertification courses)
- **EVERY THREE YEARS:** Constitutional and Proper Use of Authority, Procedural Justice, Civil Rights, Human Rights, Cultural Competency, Mental Health Awareness and Response, Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect, Officer Wellness, Trauma Informed Response and Investigation of Sexual Assault/Abuse
- **EVERY FOUR YEARS:** Lead Homicide Investigator (Training by assignment), Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (Training by assignment)
- **EVERY FIVE YEARS:** Psychology of Domestic Violence

Quotas

We do not have arrest or ticketing quotas. There is legislation from the last few years that makes quotas illegal. However, the Wheaton Police Department has not had arrest or ticket quotas in more than 30 years. We expect officers to enforce laws appropriately using a fair, balanced approach.

Police Officer Selection

Our selection process in hiring outstanding police officers is extensive. To start, Wheaton Police Officers must have a bachelor's degree to qualify for employment. In 2015, the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported only 1% of police departments in the U.S. required a 4-year degree.

Police applicants must also pass a multitude of screening phases including: physical agility test, written test of critical thinking/comprehension, thorough background investigation performed by our detectives, a Wheaton-unique 8-hour ride-along with a police officer who assesses the candidate, polygraph examination, oral interview with a civilian board comprised of Wheaton residents, psychological compatibility examination performed by an outside entity, and a medical screen.

State statute requires new police officers to complete a 480-hour basic police academy and a state certification exam. Once the candidate passes the state certification exam, Wheaton requires the new officer to complete a 12-month probationary period. During the probationary period, new police officers are assigned to field training, where a specially-trained officer teaches and assesses the new officer one-on-one for an additional 600 hours. Prior to the end of the probationary period, the new officer returns to the field training officer for an additional 72 hours for further assessment of the new officer's development. A probationary period assessment is completed by a supervisor and forwarded to

the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners for a final decision regarding the conclusion of the probationary status. In the past 4 years, a total of 7 new officers did not successfully complete their probationary period.

Policing involves many unpredictable situations and dynamic, life-threatening situations. We provide quality training and ensure the officers are properly equipped. We hire the best candidates possible, and our department culture is one of respect and integrity.

Guiding Principles

Policies, procedures, and training go a long way to ensuring successful outcomes, but what has been more impactful on police officer conduct is the guiding principles of the Wheaton Police Department. Almost 20 years ago, former Chief Mark Field instituted a principle-based standard to ensure we were not just doing things right, but we were doing the right things. Our principles are the compass that helps guide the conduct of all officers. They are the lens we use to examine our decisions and chart our future. These principles are:

- **Respect:** Police employees are delegated with duties and powers, granted by the public, to protect and serve the community. Dedicated to such empowerment, police employees shall hold in high esteem each person they serve. Respect for life and the dignity of persons serves as a basis for decisions, action, and our treatment of others. Often the police are called upon to be care-givers when rendering aid or settling disputes. Respect for another's situation, coupled with compassion for those involved or affected, encourages public cooperation and continued support of the law enforcement mission.
- **Balance:** The department recognizes its function being divided into three areas: order maintenance, law enforcement, and community service. Each employee balances his/her efforts based on the public's requests, expectations, and trust. The quality of community life warrants a reasonable approach to the department's deployment of personnel, resources, and efforts.
- **Fairness:** The police are respected in a free democratic society only when fairness flows from the police to the public. Police decisions, actions and rapport must be fairly applied to all persons without prejudice or bias. Each member of the department is entrusted to be equitable, fair, and just in their interactions with all persons regardless of age, race, gender, creed, physical condition, economic status, or political affiliations. The Wheaton Police Department prides itself on providing fair, impartial treatment to all persons in each and every contact.
- **Integrity:** The police profession must stand and represent to the people a strong, incorruptible force upon which the people can rely for protection, support, and aid. Honesty, openness, and stability on the part of the police provide a foundation for continued public trust, confidence, and cooperation. In its relations with its own members, the public, and the criminal justice system, the department must remain straightforward, sincere, and honorable. This most honorable and demanding profession requires that only those with integrity serve in its ranks.
- **Ethical Performance:** In a position of public trust, police officers are held to a higher standard of conduct. Police conduct must be consistently within the law and set the example for others. Decisions made by police officers have extensive and varied implications for those persons involved and the community at large. Ethical performance and behavior by the police provide a foundation upon which the community's quality of life rests. When the police represent and stand for noble principles, repel corruption, and adhere to the law, the community and its quality of life remain firm.

- **Reverence of the Law:** In enforcing the law, the police must act within the law as set forth by the framers of our Constitution, the Bill of Rights, state statute and judicial interpretation. Their purpose is to provide for enforcement of the law with fundamental fairness and equity. Through the Bill of Rights, the dignity of the individual person in America was placed in a position of importance. A peace officer's enforcement should not be done in grudging adherence to the legal rights of the accused, but in a spirit of seeing that every accused person is given those rights as far as it is within the power of the police. In the discharge of our enforcement of criminal statutes, the peace officer must scrupulously avoid any conduct which would make him a violator of the law. The end does not justify the means. Since we enforce the law, we must not break it ourselves. We are responsible to enforce the law and work within its boundaries.
- **Community Policing:** Community policing is a philosophy, an old time-tested philosophy which bases itself on the following: Public Approbation of Police, Crime Prevention, Public Are the Police, People Working with Police, People Working with People.
- **Test of Police Effectiveness:** The true test of police effectiveness is the minimization of crime and the presence of public order. It is not the evidence of police action in dealing with crime and disorder. Ultimately, the department and each of its members are responsible to the people.

Where do we go from here?

Our federal and state representatives have already begun to debate and analyze issues related to policing and racism. They have been duly elected to represent the concerns and needs of their constituents. On a local level, we will await the legislated changes and adjust accordingly to maintain the legitimacy of our authority.

We will also examine our policies, procedures, and practices to ensure we are not only compliant with our legal requirements but also policing in a manner supported and desired by the community. We believe a focus on hiring, training, supervision, and transparency are important to future discussions about policing in our community. The City had already begun a discussion to add a mental health and social services component to augment the various services offered by first responders. The Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police and the DuPage County Chief of Police Association will also be actively examining the issues of professional police practices, racism, and bias.

I would like to close by saying the Wheaton Police Department is comprised of incredibly professional, loyal, and selfless people. The citizens are being served by highly educated and well-trained professionals. This does not make us immune to racism or biases, and the officers are human and just as fallible as everyone else. However, they are principled, compassionate, and committed to professionalism in policing. All our employees strive to serve and protect the City of Wheaton and its residents every day of the year. I have seen firsthand their sacrifices throughout my 30 years of service. I am proud of them. We appreciate your support and will never take it for granted.

Respectfully,



Bill Murphy
Chief of Police