June 29, 2020

Dear Community Member,

The Township of Grosse Ile Police Department was thoroughly disturbed and disgusted by the actions of now-former Minneapolis police officers in their treatment of George Floyd. Mr. Floyd tragically died as a result of the encounter, whereby the officers acted outside of acceptable training, policy, and tactics. Incidents of police brutality shock the conscience and questions the basic humanity of those who violate our solemn oath. Serving as police officers has been an honor and a privilege. The Grosse Ile Police Department promises to treat all individuals whom we serve with respect and offer fair and equitable treatment. What was witnessed is not a practice the Grosse Ile Police Department condones.

*Our department policy states the use of chokeholds, neck restraints, or other similar weaponless control techniques are prohibited unless the use of deadly force is justified.* For example: To stop an offender from using explosives that put others' lives in danger. All sworn personnel receive in-service training on all department use of force policies.

In early 2019, the FBI’s National Use of Force Data Collection was launched to provide information on use-of-force incidents. We’re very proud to note that we have had no incidents to contribute, and we will do everything we can to maintain that statistic. Only about 40% of police departments have voluntarily subscribed to providing this information. We hope this is viewed as an effort towards transparency and communicates our proactive efforts.

The department follows the latest requirements and guidelines of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards. The commission is nationally recognized as a leader in the development of training and ethical standards for law enforcement officers.

Our departmental philosophy is grounded in a community policing model of engagement, education and
enforcement. Engagement is first because it is our priority. We strongly believe in the importance of communication and building relationships and trust; it is our first line of service. We have implemented a bicycle patrol to remove officers from patrol vehicles and provide pedestrian contact as well as enhanced interaction within our business district stakeholders. Our Marine Unit provides contact with recreational boaters in one of the most active watercraft areas in the country. Boater safety & education is provided to vessel operators on safe watercraft operation and having the necessary safety equipment. The DARE Program was instituted in 1993 and has reached more than 3,700 students. While the program bridges a gap between police officers and children, the primary goal is to give students the necessary tools to take charge of their lives and recognize consequences of substance abuse. The curriculum is taught by a uniform officer and discusses decision making, confidence, communication, peer pressure, bullying and resistance strategies. The introduction to a police officer at an early age fosters long-lasting and positive relationship that the community of Grosse Ile has come to appreciate.

Over the past several years, the department began the laborious process to earn law enforcement accreditation through the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission, developed to enhance professionalism and police accountability. When this assessment is completed, we will have met more than 100 professional standards based on legal precedence and best practices. To maintain our accreditation, we must complete regular training on de-escalation techniques and implicit bias. A member of the management team and department supervisor will soon be instructors in Realistic De-escalation. This will allow in-service training of the department staff at a fiscal savings, compared to sending each officer to many and varied locations independently and offer uniform delivery. This expensive training is to equip professional trainers with the scientific knowledge of resolution methods for potentially violent confrontations between law enforcement officers and subjects. This information will help participants assess the circumstances accurately and defuse those situations without violence when possible, using easy-to-grasp and successfully applied tactics to achieve voluntary compliance and prevent use-of-force crises from erupting. Additionally, our department staff has been trained in an accredited Mental Health First Aid training program to help someone who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. This training helps the officer identify, understand and respond to signs of addictions and mental illness. The curriculum addresses assessing the person’s mental, medical and emotional state and provides techniques for the officer to manage or prevent the officer from losing control. As one part of our transparency initiatives, all classes our officers annually attend are listed in the police department year-end report.

With regard to police recording equipment that has generated great interest surrounding current events. In 2014, the police department’s in-car vehicle camera systems – "dash-cams" - were upgraded and replaced at great expense. In 2019, four in-car camera units were either added or upgraded to our vehicle fleet. These systems cover a majority of our interaction with the public. A study of the efficacy of
“body cams” is underway. The results will be reviewed by the Police Departments Command Staff and the Police Officers’ Association, with a recommendation as to their cost effectiveness brought to the Police Commission and the Township Board for possible incorporation into a new five-year plan and upcoming police budgets.

An original five-year plan in draft form is under review and will be brought to the Township Board for approval. According to the plan for fiscal year 2019, $8,500.00 was projected for the purchase of body cameras. A five-year contract as proposed by one vendor is currently between $77,668 - $109,772, depending on the model of equipment deployed. This would include replacement cameras every two years since the technology becomes outdated and features of these electronic devices improve rapidly. Recent examples of added technology are the implementation of GPS to track the video cameras location and the ability to live stream the officers’ activity in real time. It should be highlighted that body cameras incur a substantial amount of abuse while being worn on the body and are used as part of an officer’s everyday equipment. The longevity of body cameras functionality is varied based on exposure to elements, use, and treatment in the field. Operating on annual budget proposals, this equipment is at great cost to the taxpayer and we have historically been asked to reduce our budgets to lessen the chances of tax increases to our community. We have begun a study of the efficacy of current on-person recording capabilities based on national results and will assess benefits of such systems versus the costs they incur. For each forecasted year under the draft five-year plan, anticipated annual proceeds to be received under forfeiture was projected between $300,000 to $400,000 annually. During fiscal year 2017 through 2020, we received less than half of the projected annual revenue. The projected shortfall has required us to reassess priorities, reexamine a need’s assessment and apply revisions to the plan. We are a small department with financial constraints and are hopeful grant funding will become available.

We have currently evaluated multiple body camera vendors that would meet our department needs and would work in concert with current equipment. This platform requires individual cameras for 17 officers, charging/docking stations, subscription to “the cloud” for data preservation and software for retrieval and processing of multiple officer’s camera systems for each case/incident they may be involved. A separate software program is necessary to allow redaction of video for FOIA requests is also required. It needs to also be noted, our records clerk is responsible for every FOIA request. The additional cameras will require a considerable amount of time to fulfill the requests and coordinate multiple cameras on scene into a digestible and user-friendly presentation. This technology requires additional training for our staff in the arduous task of assembling voluminous amounts of data into an acceptable format for dissemination.
We will propose the appropriate system, if any, that meets our needs and not settle for inferior equipment or spend taxpayer dollars without extreme scrutiny and oversight of what’s being offered in the market. Our proposal after Commission review, will be submitted to the Township Board at the appropriate budgetary time seeking their opinions. The latest technology would be wonderful to have at this time, however, funding constraints and our outstanding record in de-escalation make this a low priority.

Mark G. Warnick, Chief of Police

Brent M. Hardin, Deputy Chief of Police

Kenneth T. Polland, Lieutenant