

To the South Portland Community: June 01, 2020

As law enforcement professionals and as human beings, we want the community of South Portland to know that we share in the concern of those who are saddened, troubled, and incensed by the actions and inaction of those members of the Minneapolis MN Police Department that resulted in the tragic death of George Floyd. These type of actions are in no way indicative of the professional policing displayed on our city streets each and every day. Our heartfelt sympathy and deepest condolences go out to the Floyd family. The members of the South Portland Police Department are proud of the relationships we have established with all of the populations we serve, and we do not want the negative impact of what has happened in Minneapolis to damage your trust in us and our profession.

You can be assured that we have policies and strategies in place that support our mission of reducing crime and the fear associated with crime and of engaging with the community so we can provide superior service that will improve the quality of life for people who live, work, and recreate in South Portland. We have enjoyed the support of the community, and we attribute much of this to our reputation for transparency and excellence. This begins with our hiring process, where we strive to hire a diverse, capable, and professional staff of men and women who meet our high moral and ethical standards. We train our officers in decision making, de-escalation techniques, and implicit bias so they can be prepared to act appropriately under stressful and rapidly evolving situations. We provide our officers with the best equipment possible so they will have the tools necessary to be safe and effective. Most importantly, we hold our officers accountable to our high standards.

The training, tactics, and professionalism of the men and women of the South Portland Police Department has allowed us to achieve national accreditation from CALEA and state accreditation from MLEAP. We are able to provide exceptional service to the community because we have implemented best business practices for police agencies that include the completion of the IACP One Mind Campaign Pledge, employing a full-time Behavioral Health Liaison, and both in-car and body worn camera programs. Every South Portland police officer has received Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training and certification which instills verbal de-escalation techniques to avoid physical altercations and assist those afflicted with mental health issues, substance use disorder, and co-occurring disorders with getting the treatment necessary to improve their life rather than introducing them to the judicial and correctional system.

The officers of the South Portland Police Department are guided by the values of Integrity, Respect, Service, and Fairness and we practice procedural justice by being fair in processes, being transparent in actions, providing opportunity for voice, and being impartial in decision making. South Portland has not suffered through the painful experiences of Minneapolis and other places, but we can and will learn from them and strive to maintain our reputation and commitment to excellence.

We thank you for your ongoing support. We remain Ready to Protect and Proud to Serve.

Sincerely,

Timothy Sheehan
Chief of Police, South Portland Police Department

Kevin Gerrish
South Portland Police Command and Supervisors Union

Shane Stephenson
President, South Portland Police Patrolman's Association