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DEFUNDING THE BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT
Response to Citizen Concerns

Burlington, VT. (June 11, 2020) – The Burlington Police Officers' Association recognizes the many passionate public comment participants in the recent Finance Committee and Police Commission meetings and offers the following response.

The Burlington Police Officers' Association does not take the tragic death of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement in Minneapolis, MN lightly. BPOA members discuss, analyze, and criticize the actions of other officers every day. We do not, and will not, tolerate policing this city's residents differently because of the color of their skin. After much deliberation, the BPOA didn't comment on the death of George Floyd not because we did not see the need to, but because we felt that the black community and allies for people of color did not want or need to hear from the police.

The BPOA would also like to address the following:

- The BPOA continues to believe that, without a clear and effective plan to reduce police-involved calls for service that routinely yield positive results, any reduction in the size of the Burlington Police Department will make Burlingtonians less safe.
- BPOA members serving as School Resource Officers do not enforce truancy or school rules. These valued members of our association resolve criminal matters (domestic violence, child abuse, etc.), engage in community outreach, and teach first aid, barricading, and active shooter preparedness to staff and students. They keep kids safe.
- The BPOA has reached out to Burlington Police Commission Chair Jabulani Gamache and expressed our interest in working with the commission to find solutions to the many concerns of Burlingtonians. We look forward to improving the relationship between the community and our member officers.
- The BPOA is committed to helping the city find solutions to the issues of mental health, homelessness, and substance use disorder through collaboration and cooperation throughout the community.
- As employees of the busiest department in the state, the BPOA is also sending letters to our state legislators in order to offer our assistance in drafting revisions to H.464 and H.808. These bills are important pieces of legislation that may result in sweeping changes to law enforcement in Vermont. We look forward to offering our significant insight and experience.

- According to a report released by the Burlington Police Department, “the disparity in the types of force used by race are caused by ‘firearm display only’ incidents —where a firearm is pointed at a subject, but no other force is used.” The following is a direct excerpt from the BPD 2019 Use of Force Report which analyzed use-of-force from 2012-2018:
 - **“These incidents are largely attributable to search warrant executions or incidents involving a violent felony suspect, when subjects’ behavior is unpredictable or volatile.** Per department policy, an officer must record every person at whom the officer pointed his or her firearm. During search warrants, this may involve more than one officer pointing a firearm at more than one person, thus generating numerous reports and involving numerous subjects. Fully one third of black use-of-force subjects are involved in these types of incidents, compared to a fifth of white subjects. In total, there were 432 subjects involved in “firearm display only” incidents. **When these incidents are excluded the disparity in the type of force used against subjects of different races all but disappears.”**
- BPOA members Senior Officer Joseph Corrow and Senior Officer Corey Campbell, as well as non-union member Sgt. Jason Bellavance, have had their use-of-force incidents reviewed by prosecutors, external investigators, and Burlington Police Department command staff. There was no criminal conduct and each officer was disciplined. These matters are closed and any attempt to impose further discipline would be a violation of employment law and result in civil litigation by the BPOA on behalf of our members. They continue to serve the city with integrity and respect.

There are solutions to the many issues facing the criminal justice system and we believe the police must be an integral part of the coming reforms. The BPOA plans to work with the City of Burlington and State of Vermont to ensure our communities remain some of the safest in the nation.

The Burlington Police Officers’ Association is committed to promoting the ethical practices, policies, and standards befitting the Law Enforcement profession. Established in 1969, the members of the Association, consisting of the rank and file officers of the Burlington Police Department, strive to support the citizens of Burlington through all of the Association’s private and public affairs. We contribute to enhancing of the quality of life in Burlington through financial support and volunteerism. Our financial support to the community is made possible through donations to the BPOA, our fund-raising activities and our membership.

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