

January 17, 2021

An Open Letter To the Citizens of California, from the Mayor and Aldermen

Recently, allegations were made relating to the operations of the California Police Department. The City of California is aware of the allegations. The City is unable to fully address all of those allegations publicly, as an investigation is underway, and the City cannot comment on legal matters or personnel matters. Regardless, the City wants the Citizens of California to know that the integrity of the Police Department, and its operations, are of the utmost importance to the City, and we had already begun to address those issues prior to former officer Tew's interview with the media.

City officials first learned of allegations and concerns regarding some aspects of the operation of the California Police Department late in the evening on Wednesday, December 30, 2020, when former officer Tew called the Mayor about the matter. The Mayor called the City Attorney Perry to advise her of the situation, and by the morning of Thursday, December 31, 2020, all appropriate City officials and employees were working to address those concerns. Immediate steps were taken within the Police Department to address the storage and management of evidence, and to make certain all evidence is secure. On Monday, January 4, 2021, the Mayor and Aldermen initiated a formal review of the allegations, as well as a review of the general operational condition of the Department.

The City worked immediately to retain the services of Gary Kempker, dba GBK Advisors, LLC. On his own time, Mr. Kempker immediately started to work with the City Police Department to address the evidence management issue. Mr. Kempker's role will be "To analyze the current conditions, policies and procedures, and operational effectiveness of the California, Missouri Police Department and to identify potential areas for improvement or correction that complies with applicable laws, statutes and police standards."

Mr. Kempker is already working with the Police Department to address all concerns. His work is ongoing. Mr. Kempker has assured City Officials that the evidence issues have been addressed and that all evidence is secure.

The City also retained the services of Amanda Grellner as Special Counsel, to assist the City Attorney in the investigation of the allegations made. Ms. Grellner has initiated her investigation, and that work is ongoing.

The credentials of both Mr. Kempker and Ms. Grellner are impeccable.

Mr. Kempker served in the United States Air Force (Law Enforcement Specialist), with the Jefferson City Police Department (Officer, Shift Commander, and as Chief of Police), as Director of the Missouri Department of Public Safety, as Director of the Missouri Department of Corrections, and as Interim Cole County Sheriff. He now has a consulting firm called GBK Advisors, LLC.

Ms. Grellner has been in the private practice of law since 2000. She has served as (part time) Prosecuting Attorney of Osage County since 2002. Her undergraduate and law degrees are from the University of Missouri. Ms. Grellner serves as President of the Board of the Community Health Center of Central Missouri, as a Board Member of various community and service organizations, and is a member of the 20th Judicial Circuit Bar Association, the Cole County Bar, and the Phelps County Bar. She is a Member of the Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, the National District Attorney's Association, a Board Member of the Prosecuting and Circuit Attorneys Retirement System, and a Committee Member of the Statewide Treatment Court Committee.

The City is awaiting the findings and reports of Mr. Kempker and Ms. Grellner.

The City and its Officials take any allegations of wrongdoing seriously. The City responded immediately, and acted immediately, to address the issues that were brought to its attention. At this time, the City is unaware of any theft or wrongdoing with respect to evidence, or lost or stolen property in the City's possession. Contrary to information set forth in the recent news article, the police department and the evidence rooms have been long secured from public access.

City officials are aware that turnover within the Department, over the past few years, commencing with Former Chief Ward's termination, has created a lack of continuity in management policies. Chief Hurt has been working vigorously to address these concerns; the issues did not develop overnight, nor will they be resolved overnight.

All evidence maintained by the City is secure.

It is the City's policy to refrain from commenting on pending legal matters, and to refrain from commenting on personnel matters.

The integrity of the California Police Department, and the integrity of the evidence obtained by the Department, will be maintained. The City of California, Missouri, will continue to provide its citizens and visitors to the City with professional, qualified and highly trained police officers and services to ensure public safety.