



## Black Mountain Police Department

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*Shawn Freeman, Chief of Police*

Ref: Concerns with the Black Mountain Police Department's Policies/Procedures and Accusations of Biased Policing in Black Mountain

Mayor,

I have received several email and phone calls regarding citizens' concerns with the events that occurred in Minneapolis and asking "how the Black Mountain Police Department works". First, let me start by saying I and my officers have reviewed/seen the video of the events surrounding the death of George Floyd at the hands of now ex-police officers with the Minneapolis Police Department. We were appalled, enraged and disgusted by the acts we saw. These acts contradict all we have sworn to uphold in our oath of office and the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics. The actions taken in Minneapolis against Mr. Floyd has dismantled years of community building and trust between many agencies and the citizens they serve across America. Although these heinous acts were committed by four ex-officers, the entire law enforcement profession are now exposed to the negative wave crossing this country.

As Chief, I and my staff are constantly looking at trending and emerging issues affecting law enforcement to include biased policing. We want to ensure we are doing our very best to bring top quality law enforcement to the citizens we serve. Likewise, we look at events that occur with law enforcement agencies across the nation, to include after action reviews of events, in order to learn from other agencies mistakes and positive gains. My command staff has either read or has detailed knowledge of President Obama's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Report and maintain a copy in our office. Likewise, many of the initiatives mentioned in the Campaign Zero (or 8 Can't Wait Initiative) were a direct result of some of the recommendations from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Report. Due to the detailed knowledge of both the report and the initiative, the Black Mountain Police Department has implemented many aspects of each over three years ago.

Recently, citizens have called for eight important initiatives that include 1) **Ban chokeholds and neck restraints**, 2) **Require officers to de-escalate situations when possible, eliminating or reducing the need to use force**, 3) **Require officers to give a verbal warning before shooting**, 4) **Require officers to exhaust all other alternatives, including non-force and less lethal force options prior to resorting to deadly force**, 5) **Ban shooting at moving vehicles**, 6)



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**Require officers to intervene and stop the use of excessive force by other officers, 7) Establish a use of force continuum that restricts the most severe types of force, 8) Require officers to report each time they use force or threaten to use force.** All 8 of the above recommendations have been in policy for at least three years. In the past year we began sending staff to Critical Intervention Training (C.I.T.) that provides officers with advanced de-escalation skills (several officers are already certified). COVID slowed this process, but the department's goal is all staff members will be C.I.T. certified in the very near future.

Internally, the Black Mountain Police Department has taken additional steps to monitor how we police. In April of 1999, the State of North Carolina implemented an initiative monitoring traffic stops conducted by law enforcement. Agencies that met certain criteria were mandated to have police officers complete a traffic stop report after every vehicle stop. These reports tracks data such as race, age, sex, search and seizure, reason for the stop and several other criteria. Each report is then uploaded into a State wide data base that is accessible to everyone. While the Town of Black Mountain did not meet the criteria to mandate officers to complete these reports, upon my arrival in 2017, I mandated we participate in this program. Externally, the Black Mountain Police Department continues to work to ensure transparency and accountability of our officers. We have worked diligently with the Buncombe County District Attorney's Office and District Attorney Todd Williams to ensure officers who step out of line are held accountable for their actions. The Black Mountain Police Department was a leader in the development and implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding addressing issues that fall under Brady/Giglio (Brady/Giglio is case law pertaining to officer misconduct). The development of this MOU has been in the works for well over a year and all Buncombe County law enforcement agencies have agreed to participate. This MOU requires agencies to report misconduct to the District Attorney who will investigate allegations of misconduct by an officer. This MOU is one additional step to ensure checks and balances within the Black Mountain Police Department as well as solidify the trust of the citizens we serve. This initiative would have been released to the public and media months ago had the State not encountered the issues with COVID-19. There are other initiatives the Black Mountain Police Department are developing with the District Attorney's Office that will get offenders much-needed help rather than simply incarcerating them in the NC Department of Corrections. I only tell this to demonstrate the work the Black Mountain Police Department is doing internally and within our county to reform the law enforcement profession and build trust with our citizens. I hope emphasizes the Black Mountain Police Department's commitment to the citizens of Black Mountain. It is our life work to provide the best, impartial, biased free, ethical and professional service to our citizens. We are committed to this community and building an environment for ALL to feel safe. This can only be accomplished through collaboration with our citizens, businesses, schools and local officials.

With commitment to our citizens,

Chief Shawn Freeman and the staff of the Black Mountain Police Department



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