



Waltham Police Department

"Protecting and Serving with Pride"



June 3, 2020

Dear Waltham Residents,

The members of the Waltham Police Department are greatly troubled by the in-custody death of George Floyd in Minneapolis last week. When tragic events of this nature occur, communities collectively question the training and professionalism of their own police departments. I want to take this opportunity to assure the residents of Waltham that their police department consists of highly trained professionals that strive to treat people with the utmost dignity and respect, and honor the relationship with which we have been entrusted by the community.

Some members of our community have expressed interest in learning more about our departmental policies and procedures, as well as training. I first want to address the following specific concerns which have arisen as a direct result of the George Floyd incident in Minneapolis:

- The Waltham Police Department has long emphasized, both through training and policy, the importance of de-escalation and minimizing the amount of force used in all Use of Force events.
- The Waltham Police Department trains all officers to recognize indications of medical distress and requires that they provide immediate, appropriate medical care. This training addresses specific medical concerns relating to Use of Force encounters, including behavioral indicators of medical distress, as well as the recognition, treatment and prevention of excited delirium and positional asphyxia.
- All officers receive specific training relating to the inherent risk of techniques involving the neck or throat. The Waltham Police Department does not train officers to use any maneuvers or techniques which, by their inherent design, restrict a subject's airway in an effort to gain compliance.

One of the most critical components of the Department's dedication towards professionalism and innovation is the Accreditation Assessment process. In 1999, the Waltham Police Department became the first police department in the Commonwealth to achieve accreditation by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission and has remained an accredited police department since that time. Accreditation Assessment involves a process of intense internal and external scrutiny of Department directives and practices. Our commitment to the ongoing Accreditation process is a crucial step towards ensuring Department-wide compliance with established best practices. It also facilitates

innovation through networking and collaboration with established and respected law enforcement professionals from across the Commonwealth.

Among the most substantial subjects in the Accreditation Assessment process is the thorough scrutiny of our Department's Use of Force policies, practices, documentation and training. First and foremost, the Waltham Police Department requires documentation and review of each Use of Force incident by each officer in order to ensure continued accountability and unbiased review. Each and every use of force incident is subject to immediate review by first line supervisors, then a more extensive, separate review by subject matter experts within the Department, as well as members of the Command Staff.

Additionally, in order to identify potential emerging trends or concerns, the Department conducts an Annual Use of Force Review. Like all Department Policies & Procedures, the Waltham Police Department Use of Force Policy is constantly being reviewed, evaluated and updated in accordance with best practices. Similarly, the staff of the Training Division is dedicated to providing the most up to date and timely training to all members of the Department. The Waltham Police Department is fortunate enough to have many members that have long been especially engaged in both developing training curriculums and actively training police officers from within the Department, across the state and even internationally.

The Municipal Police Training Committee mandates that officers statewide receive 4-8 hours of training annually in the areas of Use of Force. Officers in this Department receive approximately 16 hours annually in these issues including an in-depth review of the Waltham Police Department's Use of Force policy. In addition to this mandated training, within the last two years, all Waltham officers have had extensive training in the following topics:

- 21st Century Policing, including Social & Procedural Justice,
- De-escalation, Verbal Defense & Influence, and
- Integrating Communication, Assessment and Tactics (ICAT)

Additionally, many of our officers have completed extensive specialty training in the above topics, including certification through the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Crisis Intervention Team and Critical Incident Stress Management through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF).

The Waltham Police Department enthusiastically seeks out opportunities to improve communication and collaboration within the community. Our Citizens Police Academy operates every fall and has been a very popular program since its inception. We consistently get rave reviews. I would encourage anyone who wants to acquire an inside look at our police department and get to know some of our officers to please sign up for the program. The Citizens Police Academy experience provides us with an invaluable opportunity to get to know members of our community and to obtain a better understanding of their perspective on how we do policing.

We recognize the importance of creating positive, non-enforcement police relationships with all members of the community, starting at a young age. Starting in the school year 2019-2020, the Waltham Police Department became the first in the Commonwealth to have a dedicated School Resource officer placed within every public school. Having these officers embedded in the schools allows them to be actively engaged in students' daily lives, building trust and forging significant, long term bonds. Similarly, the Waltham Police Department has long enjoyed the benefits of an active and robust Police Athletic League where officers interact with the community's youth in a positive manner, establishing constructive, supportive relationships after school hours. Many youths involved in these programs have grown up to become Waltham Police officers themselves.

We are always actively exploring opportunities for improvement and innovation in Training and Operations. At times like this, there are no simple answers or quick solutions. I want to reassure you that the Waltham Police Department is committed to preserving the safety, security and integrity of all community members, and we look forward to engaging with those members in shaping our collective future.

Sincerely,

Chief Keith D. MacPherson