



# HANOVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Charles B. Dennis, Chief of Police

## MEMORANDUM

To: Hanover Select Board  
Julia Griffin, Town Manager

From: Charles B. Dennis, Chief of Police

Date: June 30, 2020

**Subject: Community Update on Agency Operations and Transparency**

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First and foremost, I want to state publicly again that I condemn the actions of the former officers in Minneapolis with regard to the horrific murder of George Floyd on Memorial Day and I know that every officer in the Hanover Police Department shares that belief. His death was disgusting, disheartening, and I am saddened to say that it was preventable, by those sworn to protect, serve, and help him.

I released a written statement on June 2<sup>nd</sup> to the media as the President of the New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police and as the Hanover Chief of Police condemning the actions and inactions of the former Minneapolis officers and had it posted on our Town website. I also participated in two on-camera interviews with WMUR and NBC 5 that same day regarding the statement. This statement was also a call to action for law enforcement leaders across the State to address this issue head-on and to take action.

The murder of Mr. Floyd has resulted in a continuation of a societal-wide movement towards criminal justice reform in our country. In communities across our nation, there have been peaceful protests, civil unrest, and calls for police reform. The reality is, however, that police and community relations in many areas have been strained for decades. I'm sure each of you could name a few such as Ferguson, Baltimore, and Minneapolis. Unfortunately, the actions of some agencies and some officers has resulted in degradation of trust and legitimacy which is so important to a law enforcement agency.

I want our community members to know that in my role as their Chief of Police and as the President of the New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police, I have been busy working with my colleagues across the State to address the failures that we have seen play out across the country with regard to excessive force, police brutality, failure to intervene, and respective police reforms.

I have participated in thoughtful discussions and conversations with the Offices of Senator Hassen and Senator Shaheen as well as with Congresswoman Kuster and Congressman Pappas on the national level regarding police reforms. I had the honor to present testimony before the NH Senate Judiciary on Friday regarding a HB 1645 section 15 titled "Reports of Misconduct by Law Enforcement Officers".

I understand the outrage and anger that this tragic event has ignited and the many concerns that people within our community now have about policing. I want to assure you that here at the Hanover Police Department we will continue to provide Fair and Impartial Policing that all of you can be proud of. We work hard to keep our community members safe, provide excellent customer service, foster strong community relationships and partnerships while being accountable and transparent.

Part of being accountable and transparent was the addition of a body-worn camera program in 2018. Body-worn cameras assist in providing a documented account of officers interactions with the public and how they handle each and every call for service. We also have in-car cameras that record every traffic stop and that program was implemented in 2008. There are many benefits to both of these programs, but transparency and accountability are two of the big ones.

I have received numerous phone calls, emails, and inquiries regarding several questions surrounding policies and how they compare to recommendations made by police reform organizations, such as “8 can’t wait”, training, and use of force, among others. I would like to address some of the concerns if I may now.

Use of force by law enforcement is an area that requires regular review to maintain the safety of the public we serve and law enforcement officers. The murder of George Floyd has prompted police departments across the country to re-examine their use of force policies. Hanover Police have overarching core values of integrity, respect, fairness, excellence, and positivity, and keeping with those values, we must be open to review and change of policies as needed.

Members of the Hanover Police Department are provided guidelines for the use of force through department policy (HPD General Order 410) and NH State law. In our department, staff and I have reviewed our Use of Force policy and instituted two immediate changes. Since the State of New Hampshire and the Hanover Police Department does not train officers to perform chokeholds, our Use of Force policy did not previously address this issue. In my review, however, I noted that we have officers that received their academy training from other states, so I have issued a special order, effective immediately, amending the policy stating “Choke holds and other neck restraints are prohibited unless lethal force is authorized”.

Also, during my review, I noted that we had a section in our “Rules and Regulations” policy covering a duty to report misconduct. We had the expectation that officers would intervene when necessary, but I believe that a clearly stated “Duty to Intervene” clarification was needed, and it should be placed in the Use of Force Policy.

This was handled by issuing a special order, that was effective immediately. I communicated in the order that it is my expectation that all officers will use sound judgment when working together to restrain an individual and that includes intervening, when necessary, to protect themselves and others from harm and I defined the Duty to Intervene as follows:

**Duty to Intervene - Police officer(s) have the responsibility to intervene and prevent or stop the use of excessive force by another officer and shall immediately do so as reasonable and necessary to ensure the safety of everyone present. Brutality, excessive and/or unreasonable use of force will be reported immediately to the on-duty Supervisor and Operations Lieutenant. The Chief of Police shall be notified.**

There are some new initiatives that I have just learned about and one is providing training for “Peer Intervention” that would go beyond simply adding the expectation of a “Duty to Intervene” in policy.

This program is called Ethical Policing is Courageous (EPIC). My belief is this type of training should become a national standard and requirement.

Our officers also receive de-escalation training in the academy and have had additional on-going de-escalation training. They have also participated in decision or judgement-making trainings through Primex, our liability insurance carrier using MILO systems, which stands for Multiple Interactive Learning Objectives. This is an interactive simulation-based training for decisions, judgement (shoot/don't shoot) and the appropriate application of the use of force. It covers active shooter, critical incidents, judgment skills, de-escalation, situational awareness, mental health, firearms, and the use of less lethal tools. (Some of our Hanover Select Board members observed this training as well in the past)

In addition, some members have completed a 40-hour crisis intervention training which is critical in dealing with those with mental health concerns, but also focuses on de-escalation.

Hanover Police have a policy about shooting at or from moving vehicles. Our current policy prohibits firing weapons from a moving vehicle and is very strict regarding the circumstances of when you could fire at a moving vehicle, allowing only for self-defense and when it does not appear an innocent person would be harmed.

If a Hanover officer uses any force against an individual, they are required to file a Subject Management Report, explaining the type of force and why it was used. Every report is reviewed by each supervisory level to ensure the force was justified and within policy. The final review is by the Chief of Police. Over the past 10 years we have had no history of excessive force.

We also have an Early Warning System for officers that tracks several different criteria to include accidents, uses of force, and citizen complaints. Once the system is triggered, we investigate the circumstances of the triggering events and any other information we may gain, to make a determination of the officer's status and any corrective actions that may be necessary.

We will continue reviewing appropriate policies and make any changes to ensure we are following law enforcement best practices. There are many ideas being exchanged that can help address the issues. Education and training is a tool for change, and we will continue to ensure that officers receive appropriate on-going education and training in implicit bias, de-escalation techniques, and wellness and resiliency, to name a few, to assist us in preventing these types of situations.

The culture and hiring practices of a police organization are critical in creating an environment of treating all people equally and fairly. It starts with our mission. The mission of the men and women of the Hanover Police Department is to "provide professional and compassionate police service through partnerships that build trust, reduce crime, create a safe environment and enhance the quality of life in our community". To fulfill this mission, we will have an uncompromising insistence on quality people who believe in our core values: Integrity, Respect, Fairness, Excellence, and Positivity.

Every employee we have hired over the last five years defines what those core values mean to them and after I read our definition, they are asked if they agree to uphold those core values as members of our agency. We also adopted our HPD C.A.R.E.S. motto back in 2017 which stands for "Compassion And Respect in Every Situation". We strive to recognize and align our commendations of officers that come from citizens with the positive character traits they displayed and that their actions demonstrated that HPD C.A.R.E.S., which reinforces the character traits we value.

We hire for character and a positive attitude first, realizing we can train and teach skills. The culture within a police agency is an important factor and I believe that we have a culture that aligns with our mission statement and core values. We will consistently look at our policies and procedures to ensure we are following the best police practices.

There are many different efforts I am currently involved in, so I would just like to list a few as we move forward.

- 1) In addition to the Statement that I issued on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, I have participated in on-camera interviews with WMUR and WPTZ, as well as an audio interview on NH Public Radio with the President of the Manchester NAACP and a Black Lives Matter representative regarding recent incidents in the news.
- 2) Continuing contacts with Dartmouth regarding law enforcement and ways we can work with different minority groups. Coordinating with Department of Safety and Security regarding joint Implicit Bias training.
- 3) Coordination with NH Chiefs to address police standards and best practices regarding Use of Force policies.
- 4) Preparation of recommendations to assist NH police agencies in instituting changes.
- 5) Participation in discussions regarding curriculum reform for NH Police Standards and Training (police academy), specifically Implicit Bias training.
- 6) Coordinating with a group at DHMC putting together a community forum regarding recent national events that we hope to participate in later this summer.
- 7) Participating in legislative hearings and conversations with our representatives about police reforms.
- 8) Participated in a conference call with the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security's Office for State and Local Law Enforcement (OSLLE) and the Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties in a national conversation regarding the intersection of social justice and law enforcement.

Community policing plays a significant role in building trust and legitimacy with a police agency. I have had the privilege to serve on the International Association of Chiefs of Police Community Policing Committee for the past 3 years. Community policing is about building relationships and partnerships within our community to achieve effective and efficient crime control, solve problems and improving the quality of life within a community.

But it goes further than that. There is an on-going responsibility for us to improve police services and police legitimacy. A need for greater accountability and a greater concern for civil rights and liberties. We have a role beyond just creating programs. I believe Hanover Police has and will continue to strive for excellence in these areas and we are always willing to improve.

In closing, the disheartening actions of a few officers in this country, tarnish the reputation of the others that have continued to work at the highest level of integrity, fairness, and professionalism. I support my officers who have continued to uphold our Core Values while providing professional and compassionate service to this community every day.

I recognize that even in the best of circumstances, there is always room for improvement, and the Hanover Police Department embraces the opportunity to continue progressive change.