



Town of Forest Heights

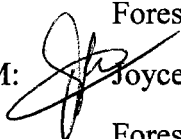
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JOYCE BECK
Mayor

MEMORANDUM

July 20, 2005

TO: Forest Heights Police Department
Forest Heights Staff

FROM:  Joyce A. Beck, Mayor

Cc: Forest Heights Residents
Forest Heights Town Council
Forest Heights Town Attorney

RE: Police Officer's Ability to Make Arrests

At approximately 1:20 a.m. on July 5, 2005, I received a telephone call from [REDACTED]. She reported sounds of shotguns being fired in the streets and illegal sexual activity in her front yard by unknown persons. She refused to call 911 saying the Prince George's County Police would not come - or if they did the activities would be over by then. She said that she was aware that Chief Eubank had gotten off an hour earlier and insisted that I call him. I did as she asked and called Chief Eubank. I asked him to have County Police respond to [REDACTED]; and to call the [REDACTED] to let them know what he had done. He did as I asked and reported back to me that County Police were on their way, and that he had talked with the Spires' and that they told him that things were quiet by then.

I called [REDACTED] back to let them know what I'd asked of the Chief and urged them to always call 911 every time they heard gun shots and explained that a high call for services would enable us to get more assistance. I also offered to meet with the [REDACTED] and their neighbors in the middle of [REDACTED] the next day to work up a plan of action that the police and community could implement that would result in crime reduction at the Park, and on [REDACTED]. I asked [REDACTED] to notify her neighbors that I was coming and that Chief Eubank would be with me. We wanted to meet to propose a coordinated community effort to stop crime.

On July 6, 2005, I arrived at the [REDACTED] home at about 7:00 p.m. [REDACTED] informed me that there would not be a meeting with the neighbors because that was not the way to address the problem - a community/police effort would not work. I waited until Chief Eubank arrived. During my wait the [REDACTED] and I talked about their desire to have the Chief make arrests in the Park and at a certain house on [REDACTED] in order to send messages that crime and prostitution will not be tolerated. I said to the [REDACTED] that the Forest Heights Police Department would not make arrests without cause (as provided by the law). Nor would they make arrests based solely on their (the [REDACTED]) desire to have arrests made. I told them that our Police would have to have a justifiable reason to lock anyone up. I also said that if they (police) made un-warranted or unjustified arrests, they would place the Town in a position of liability and that I would fire any officer that took such un-warranted action just to satisfy them (the [REDACTED]) or anyone else.

On July 13, 2005 [REDACTED] delivered a letter to me in which he accused me (and Council) of interfering with our Police Officer's ability to perform their jobs by pressuring them not to make arrests. Today I was told that [REDACTED] is now saying that on July 6, 2005, I told his wife, [REDACTED] that I told our Police Officers not to make arrests. That statement has no truth in it. It is a lie. I said what I have written to you that I said in the previous paragraph.

I want to be clear with everyone on the following points: Our Police Officers will not make un-warranted arrests. They cannot, nor will they, arrest anyone solely because someone else asks them to, or to make general statements. Our officers are trained law enforcement officials. They know when it is appropriate for them to make arrests and are free to take such action when they believe they have proper cause. They understand their own character, regard themselves as fair and impeccable. I do not believe they would knowingly, or at the pleasure of any one of us, place themselves in positions of liability, or the Town in jeopardy of being sued for unwarranted arrests. If one of them ever would, you may rest assured that they would suffer the consequence. That said, let me assure you that they will continue to enforce the laws and when they judge necessary, make arrests!

When I was first sworn into office I told our Officers that I want them to enforce the law and clean our parks and streets up by getting rid of the loitering and drug activity. I told them to demonstrate respect for everyone but to get the job done. They have done that. They have demonstrated a very high level of integrity. I trust their judgment in discharging their commitment to making our streets safer and I have no doubt that they will protect the integrity of Forest Heights Police Department.

Chief Eubank has a strong reputation for street patrol. I believed when I asked Council for support of my recommendation to promote him into this position that he would be able to drive criminal activity out of Forest Heights. I knew that he would uphold the law, protect the integrity of the Badge, and would permit his Officers to work freely to enforce the law. Crime did not come to Forest Heights over night and can not be driven out over night. There will be many conversations over whether our police are doing all they can. There will also be more accusations and placements of blame on the mayor as this slow wheel turns. But unless and until we hire more officers, and establish decent pay rates in order to attract and keep them, we will not be able to drive crime down as expeditiously as we need to, or to keep it out. And that's everybody's business!

It is true that we hear gunshots through the night. It is also true that people are selling and buying drugs in our parks and on the streets. I watch drug dealing in front of one of my neighbor's homes almost every night. It went on in front of my house until I started asking them to move their business someone else. Our Police can't rid the Town of crime by themselves. We need to work with them. I regret that I visited the [REDACTED] in an effort to establish a cooperative plan of action to address the issues of gunshots and prostitution in the area of the [REDACTED]. Or should I say, I regret discussing with them the matter of when it is right for our Police Officers to make arrests. That's the issue: What I said and how it was repeated.

Chief Eubank, my hat is off to you and your officers. You said to me that you refuse to make an un-warranted arrests no matter who tries to tell you to do otherwise. And when we talked about the [REDACTED] very valid complaint that the criminal activity has to be stopped, you said that you would drive it down and I have seen you and you Officers working hard to do just that. Until there comes the time that I am able to hire more officers to assist you, all I can do is to offer you, on behalf of the Town of Forest Heights, a sincere **THANK YOU!** for all that you do.