

POLICE OFFICERS FEDERATION OF MINNEAPOLIS

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

June 10, 2020

In September, 2019, the negotiation teams of the Federation and the city sat down to begin bargaining for the successor to the labor agreement set to expire in December of that year. In December, the Federation exercised its right under Minnesota labor law to request the assistance of a mediator assigned by the Minnesota Bureau of Mediation Services. The parties have been in mediation since January 2020.

Today, without prior notification to the Federation or the Mediator, Minneapolis Police Chief Arradondo with Mayor Frey at his side, held a press conference and stated that “I as chief need to step away from the table.” Mayor Frey stated “there are valid reasons for a party to step away from bargaining.” These statements send conflicting messages as to whether it is the Chief or the entire city team that intends to withdraw from mediation.

Minnesota statutes mandate that a public employer “meet and negotiate in good faith” with a labor union representing its employees. Pursuant to its rules, the City’s Executive Committee (an entity established by Minneapolis City Charter to consist of the Mayor, City Council President and three additional members of the City Council), not the Mayor or the Police Chief, “directs labor negotiations of the city.” Moreover, at the commencement of bargaining in September, 2019, the negotiation teams of the city and the Federation entered into a process agreement which identified the Chief as an essential member of the city’s team. The Federation sincerely hopes that by their announcement today, the Police Chief and Mayor were not stating an intent to violate state law, the city charter and the city’s process agreement with the Federation.

The public should know that, contrary to the popular and false narrative, the Federation has always welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with the City’s Police Administration and Labor Relations staff to set clear expectations, train employees as to those expectations, and improve accountability for both officers and supervisors who fail to conduct themselves accordingly. There are numerous examples, even in recent years, as to ways in the which the Federation has done so. To those who claim otherwise, we call on you state a specific example. Despite the Federation’s efforts to assist in bringing about meaningful changes, it recognizes that rarely have these efforts been successful. However, this is not because of the Federation or the terms of the labor agreement, but rather because management has failed to implement the changes the parties agreed to make.

Now, the Federation acknowledges that, as a result of the senseless death of Mr. Floyd, the public rightfully expects that talk is not enough and changes must actually be made. Change needs to be made for many reasons but primarily to prevent another horrific event such as this or even less egregious types of misconduct. However, the law and common sense both require that these changes result from a collaborative effort between the Administration and the Federation.

As it always has, the Federation remains ready, willing and able to do this difficult work. We are concerned that today the Police Chief and Mayor may have been saying that they are not.

Rather than withdraw from the necessary dialogue, the Federation calls on the Chief and the Mayor to:

- Return to mediation and negotiate in good faith;
- Stop repeating the false narrative that the Federation or the labor agreement is an impediment to change;
- Acknowledge that, upon the conclusion of an investigation of a misconduct allegation, the disciplinary process and the due process right to appeal to a neutral arbitrator are no different for a Minneapolis police officer than for any other city employee or any of the other 400,000 public employees in the state of Minnesota; and
- Resist the urge to pander to those demanding the irrational and instead give the community and its police officers the leadership they deserve by being an agent of change and facilitating the serious and important conversations which must occur among all stakeholders, so that the MPD can once again be an organization in which people are proud to serve and from which the community is proud to be served.

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