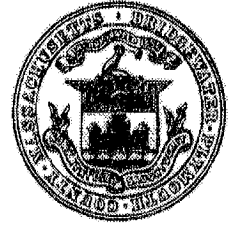




# TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER

## POLICE DEPARTMENT



June 21, 2020

*Christopher D. Delmonte*  
*Chief of Police*

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Mr. Dennis Gallagher, President  
Bridgewater Town Council  
Mr. Michael Dutton, Town Manager  
Town of Bridgewater  
66 Central Square  
Bridgewater, MA 02324

Dear President Gallagher and Town Manager Dutton,

The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN at the hands of former law enforcement officers recently was disturbing and shocking to everyone. In response, I released a statement regarding the incident on June 5, 2020, which among other things stated:

*"We are angry and sickened by this heinous crime and how it was carried out against another human being. Those responsible must be held accountable and we must do everything possible as a nation and a profession to ensure it never happens again. As police officers our foremost responsibility is to serve and protect ALL people in our community. We are in the integrity business and this tragedy is at the heart of all we do. We are and should be held to the highest standards of honor and integrity, with the greatest appreciation for the sanctity of human life. We work every day to build trust and earn the confidence of the people we serve, demonstrated by our respect and compassion for ALL." "We strongly support the voices calling for justice peacefully demonstrating around the nation, including here in Bridgewater. We are sworn to uphold, protect and defend everyone's rights and power to freely express their outrage over this incident, an anger and disgust we share."*

The egregious nature of this crime has understandably caused some to ask what the current state of policing is locally, what is our mission, and what we are doing to ensure we are policing professionally and ethically. I am pleased to report we have made some policy improvements recently and there are a number of programs and initiatives we are part of that will help address any concerns, but first I would like to share our department mission statement:

Mission Statement of the Bridgewater Police Department:

*“Our mission is to work in partnership with the community to enhance the quality of life, guarantee constitutional rights, enforce the law, preserve the peace, reduce fear, and provide a safe environment, while maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity to ensure the public’s confidence.”*

Second, we recently modified our Use-of-Force policy to ban the use of neck or carotid restraints in all circumstances unless lethal force would be authorized; require medical evaluation anytime force is used; require officers to immediately report use-of-force incidents to their supervisors; require officers to exhaust alternatives to deadly force where possible; although previously implied – now specifically creates an affirmative duty for officers to intervene when use-of-force exceeds what is reasonable under the circumstances; and prohibits shooting at moving vehicles unless any occupant is using or threatening deadly force, to name a few. Many of these changes were implied in various parts of our existing policies but not explicitly stated. The following is an excerpt from our current Use-of-Force and Use-of-Force Reporting policy guidelines:

*“The Bridgewater Police Department places the highest value on the life and safety of its police officers and all people. All officers must recognize the significance of using force against others with the greatest appreciation for the sanctity of human life. The departments regulations, policies and procedures are designed to ensure that this value guides officers in the use of force.”* Bridgewater Police Department, Policy and Procedure, Use-of-Force, Section 1.01 (Rev. June, 2020)

*“The manner in which police department members use force is an extremely critical issue that generates intense public scrutiny. When these incidents occur, they demand a thorough and complete inquiry into all aspects of the incident. Only through an exhaustive inquiry can the facts of the incident evolve, and public confidence be maintained.”* Bridgewater Police Department, Policy and Procedure, Use-of-Force Reporting, Section 1.02 (Rev. December, 2018)

Third, the Bridgewater Police Department is one of only 93 law enforcement agencies (state, municipal or college/university) in Massachusetts Accredited by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission (MPAC). Accreditation is a voluntary process of external evaluation conducted every three years by which police departments strive to meet and maintain best practices and excellence in policing. The department first achieved initial Certification in 2015, full Accreditation in 2016, and awarded re-Accreditation in 2019.

As part of the Accreditation process, among other select policies, we are required to conduct an annual review of our Use-of-Force and Biased Based Policing policies. As part of that review, we must also analyze all officer involved use-of-force incidents and public interactions to determine if there are any tendencies or patterns of potential misconduct. As outlined above, we have made some improvements recently to our Use-of-Force policy and have analyzed and documented our annual review of all use-of-force incidents by Bridgewater police officers and have done so every year since 2011. We have also conducted our Biased Based

Policing policy review and interaction analysis every year since 2015. The following is an excerpt from our Biased Based Policing policy guidelines:

*“The Bridgewater Police Department is committed to protecting the constitutional and civil rights of all citizens. The Bridgewater Police Department does not endorse, train, teach, support or condone any type of bias, stereotyping or racial and gender profiling by officers. While recognizing that most officers perform their duties in a professional, ethical and impartial manner, the Bridgewater Police Department is committed to identifying and eliminating any instances of bias based profiling.”*  
Bridgewater Police Department, Policy and Procedure, Section 4.10 (Rev. Dec. 2018)

Fourth, all Bridgewater police officers are required to complete 40 hours of annual in-service training conducted by the Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC). In the past three years, mandatory in-service training topics have included fair and impartial policing, Integrating Communication, Assessment and Tactics (ICAT) for de-escalating incidents involving assaultive subjects, and procedural justice & legitimacy, to name a few. We also send ranking officers and command staff to annual training for the Southeast Command Leadership series (1 day per month) and Chief’s Executive Leadership series (1 day per month) at the Plymouth Police Academy. We have sent officers to other advanced training in selected areas where funding allows. In the last 10 years, all supervisors have attended and received the Trilogy Award for completion of FBI-LEEDA’s Supervisor Leadership Institute (1), Command Leadership Institute (2) and Executive Leadership Institute (3) (all one-week courses). Although we are only able to commit a few officers per year, we send two officers to the 3-day Use-of-Force Summit held every year in Connecticut. The Summit combines national and international experts on current use-of-force best practices in policing. In the future, we should send more officers to the Summit as well as command staff to the FBI National Academy in Quantico, VA., and staff and line officers to advanced leadership training for future succession planning and professional development.

As you know, policy changes and improvements in how personnel carry out their duties are only effective if there is adequate and comprehensive training. Even those most critical of policing practices can agree on the correlation between quality training and best practices. Despite 78% of all Bridgewater police officers having achieved at least a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree, our annual budget for police training and professional development combined is only about 2% of the overall police budget. This is something that can and should be re-considered as part of our commitment to improving practices in the ever-changing world of policing. Similarly, when our current facility was opened in 2003, we received a generous donation for the purchase of a use-of-force - firearms training simulator which was installed in a specially dedicated room in the lower level of the station. In the years that followed, we invested further grant and capital funds to maintain this system and keep it functioning. Unfortunately, due to aged technology, the system no longer functions and has not been operational for more than two years. The simulator should be replaced immediately but will require capital funds (est. \$275,000) to replace it. The training value for officers in the application of force and judgment training in simulated scenarios, cannot be understated particularly in an environment of increased police scrutiny and continued demand for service.

Fifth, TASER Electronic Control Weapons (ECW) are authorized for all officers as a less-lethal alternative to physical confrontations and have been utilized by officers since 2011. All officers must qualify annually with their issued TASER and review department policy. The department is required to report all TASER deployments quarterly to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) even if no officer uses their assigned weapon during that time. Although not effective in every situation and not without risk, the TASER ECW can be a valuable tool in reducing injuries to both officers and subjects alike and has proven effective in controlling some violent situations.

Sixth, the department has registered and is a voluntary participant in the FBI National Use-of-Force Data Collection registry launched in 2019. This is a central data base created to collect use-of-force data nationally to be analyzed and evaluated on a more comprehensive scale.

Seventh, for the past three years we have been recipients of a regional state grant from the Department of Mental Health (\$45,000) to employ an in-house mental health and substance abuse clinician who responds with officers directly to calls for service. This is a "co-response" model grant between the Bridgewater (lead agency), East Bridgewater, West Bridgewater, Middleborough, Whitman and Bridgewater State University police departments. Our clinician, Ms. Katrina Lee is tasked with assisting responding officers with immediate crisis intervention strategies. We will never know what incidents may have been prevented or de-escalated by having a clinical professional on-scene with officers, but it is clear her professional skills and relentless follow-up for services has had a direct impact on many in our community who are struggling with mental illness or substance abuse.

Eighth, the department has operated our annual Citizens Police Academy since 1999. This is a 12-week program for residents voluntarily instructed by Bridgewater police officers on topics ranging from Constitutional Law, Use-of-Force, Domestic Violence, Canine Operations, Drunk Driving Enforcement, Criminal Law, Sex Offender Registry, Self Defense and Criminal Law. The academy was created to give citizens insight and perspective on what, how and why we do what we do. It gives us the opportunity to bridge gaps in communication, develops mutual understanding with the public we serve, and gives us the ability to form new partnerships to solve problems in our community. The program also includes a police station tour, ride-along with officers on patrol, and tour of Old Colony Correctional Center at MCI Bridgewater. Twenty-two classes and more than 400 people have graduated from the program so far.

There are other initiatives in policing that could contribute to confidence in police accountability and transparency. One of those is the use of body worn cameras by uniformed officers. The concept could be valuable and has worked in other agencies around the country. In some instances, if replayed in their entirety, body cameras can show the true nature of what officers are confronted with and the often-chaotic circumstances we encounter. Cameras could also show where officers are conducting themselves unprofessionally or even criminally. This could prove very valuable to both the department and the community. However, this is not a perfect solution and it too comes with significant expense and issues regarding storage of data, public records, and collective bargaining.

As you have also endured these past several months, our personnel have weathered the COVID-19 pandemic threat and persistent public fear, while most others worked remotely, businesses closed, and many institutions simply shut their doors. Combine that with days and

weeks of public outrage (an outrage we share) and peaceful protest, but in some cases rioting and burning. During all of this, many of our officers stood watch here at home and in other mutual aid communities preserving the right of everyone to peacefully protest, while in a few instances standing on the front lines being targeted with projectiles and fireworks. However, in the last three months very few officers took time off or were ordered to work a shift or take a post. I am proud to report every officer has taken their duty and commitment to this community seriously and served honorably and professionally during a time of social upheaval and political division.

On behalf of the professional men and women of the Bridgewater Police Department, I would like to thank you and the community for your continued support.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Delmonte", written over a horizontal line.

Christopher D. Delmonte  
Chief of Police